

St Pius & St Anthony 6th Sunday Ordinary Time Homily 2026 Year A

What a Law-ng gospel reading today! Law, Law, Law: we hear a lot of that in it!

Speaking of the law, sometimes we don't know the law statute books until we have to, because we end up on wrong side of it. Dictionaries for example, I like them - they were always around us kids (home/school) growing up. But it was repeated punishments of mine, that made me a friend of dictionaries (5th grade teacher especially liked giving out 'dictionary columns' and never columns with pictures); another punishment was having to stand against the wall at recess or lunch - or the worst possible consequence was 'all the way' - when the teacher said, "Go to the Principal's office-Go see Mr Hayden". That's a felony conviction! But I recall one **bold** classmate -- I still can't believe he tried this! Ms Taylor had sent John off to principal's office, and he was gone a while, and then our door opened again and he walked back in and sat down at his seat-kept his head down. She responded, "That was quick-did you see him?" John pouted back, 'Yes', still with his head down - *I think he was trying to act like he was crying or something to make it look real.* And she said, "What did he tell you to do." And John actually said, "Not to do it anymore". She angrily called back, "Stand up--I am escorting you right back down there - how dare you lie to me!" She knew. He had tried faking the whole thing! Too bold! But he paid dearly-had to move his desk in to the hallway & do his class work alone in detention (**and parents got a phone call!**)

So, Jesus introduces us to deeper dimensions of law in the gospel. Not just nodding to the law and performing the least duty possible. No, Jesus expands our responsibility by reveal the true purpose of law, the need to respect its intention. Jesus says in Matt 5:17 "***I have come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill.***" Jesus then goes on to give examples of fully following the law... no murder of course, but additionally how about working on anger, no adultery but additionally how about immodest thoughts or fantasies, no lying but additionally how about simple 'Yes & No', as responses, without our throwing in 'self-justifying conditions' or 'excusative' clauses to weasel out of responsibilities. Keep it simple, Yes and do it, or No and don't. Instead of deceptively putting our own conditions on statements, like, "Yes I'll help if it fits my schedule" or "Yes, I did take the whole afternoon off instead of working, but I had to deliver those files across town anyway." Our conditions are excuses, and attempts to skirt truth or make selves look better.

So, with our gospel today, Jesus, rather than cutting back/reducing the law, Jesus is adding to its observance for Integrity's sake. If you are going to follow it, then follow all of it and uphold its purpose too. This is the 'more' that Jesus is talking about, that He calls forth from His disciples "Your righteousness should

surpass that of the Pharisees...” (Mt 5:20). Yes, it may be more, that we were willing to put in to it, but that is what Jesus calls for. Not just covering the base, but going the extra distance to ‘fulfill’ the law. Jesus is talking about not just accomplishing the minimums (keeping out of jail) but upholding the intent and purpose of the law (the good of order-its integrity). It is easy to fall into slavish ‘letter observance’ instead of fulfillment of the law’s spirit. For example, the child is told ‘no TV’ during homework time, yet spends the whole period watching reels, on their Tablet (‘you said, no TV’), or when I was a kid my dad would always have to clarify to me, “Yes the sign speed limit says 35, but that doesn’t mean you race to get up to that speed and hold it there!” I was within the Letter, but broke its Spirit! Jesus’ call for us to ‘surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees’ meant that we also understand and uphold the intention of the Law. Not just the minimums but the entirety of the law observed, exceeding its perfunctory observance by also honoring the purpose of the law, too. Jesus beefing up (not abolishing but making stricter) the commandments is not really any different than when He lays down the greatest commandment, by teaching we should “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself” Matt 22:37-40). He is telling us ‘fulfill it’ Fill its observance full, by your heart being ‘all-in’ its performance. Put your whole self into serving God, by upholding the true intent of the Law. Not using it to see what we can get out of it, but getting into it, your whole self into it, by seeking to understand its inherent good along with the good of order. Jesus asks for more from us (not killing, ‘adultering’ and perjuring is not asking much – He nudges us toward greater holiness by calling us to the greater, more spiritual (fulfilling) work of de-escalating anger, increasing respect for other’s selves & their covenants, and speaking/celebrating only the truth. He asks for more from His own!

Note: Why did anyone even suggest that Jesus could be a ‘lawbreaker’ ‘abolisher’?

- 1) Sabbath Healings were considered a ‘doctor working’ (if that was your job?)
Examples: Mark 1:21-28, 29-31, 3:1-6, John 9:1-16, Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 5:1-18.
- 2) He allowed His disciples to “work” on Sabbath also- they ‘harvest grain’
By plucking heads of grain while waling through field in Matt 12:1-8
- 3) Jesus encouraged others to sin by telling the healed man to carry his mat home in John 5:8-9
(They could only walk a limited number of steps and not carry any burdensome cargo with them at all.
- 4) Jesus touched the ceremonially unclean leper (et al) in Matthew 8:3 Leviticus 5:3 states, “If he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort his uncleanness may be with which he becomes unclean....he is guilty.”
- 5) Jesus let the ‘sinning’ woman anoint-touch Him in Luke 7:39
- 6) Jesus disregarded the food prep/food purity laws in Mark 7:1-23