

6th Sunday – A 2014

SIRACH 15:15-2; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-1; MATTHEW 5:17-37

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/021614.cfm>

Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.

Well, that can be intimidating.
How can we be perfect like God?
Isn't that a little presumptuous?
How can my actions be performed perfectly?

Jesus gives us a clue in our Gospel reading today.

These statements made by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount are referred to as the six "Antitheses". We heard the first four today. We'll hear the last two in next Sunday's reading.

These statements begin with the phrase, "*You have heard that it was said...*" followed by, "*But I say to you...*"

This is a contrast or opposition between two things.
You say white; I say black.
You say to-may-to; I say to-mah-to.

Yet Jesus here is not rejecting the law.
He is not replacing the prophets.
He is bringing Jewish prophesy and the commandments to fulfillment.
He is getting to the root of what they teach.
He is moving the truth into the realm of our hearts,
from which all good and evil flows.ⁱ

Getting to the heart of it...
Isn't it said that we judge ourselves by our intentions...
but others by their actions?
Don't we feel the victim when our good intentions are misinterpreted?
This reminds us to give others the same benefit of the doubt that we deserve.

Intent is important.

In my days as a Public Safety Officer, I had to prove intent as one of the necessary elements of a criminal offense.
An accidental death is treated differently than a premeditated killing.
A homeless man who illegally enters a vacant building for warmth is charged differently than a burglar who breaks into a home to steal or injure.
We call that justice.

We can thank the justice of God that he understands my good intentions even at those times when others may not.

It is sobering, though, to know that God sees those thoughts of mine that would be shameful if they were voiced or acted upon.

For that fear, I rely on our Father's understanding and mercy.
For God incarnate, Jesus, came to live in the flesh as we live.
He experienced temptation.
Even though He never failed to choose as our Father willed, He knows how our hearts are tempted.
We can count on His understanding and mercy.

Still, I could develop a scrupulous anxiety over the things that pop into my head.
Those uninvited thoughts could spring from
an emotional reaction to an insult
or an impure thought about the opposite gender.

In truth, these reactions could be a result of how we are designed.
We are designed with the instinct of self-protection.
We are designed with the instinct of pro-creation.
These are how we are wonderfully made.
It is how I choose to react to those instincts that is the measure of how well I follow God's will.

Whenever I have such an uninvited thought, I try not to dwell on it and invite the help of our Holy Mother.
We all know how well moms can cool a hot situation.

I also find some comic relief from an old proverb,
"You may not be able to keep a bird from flying overhead,
but you can keep it from building a nest in your hair!"

If I choose to start “building a nest” with each uninvited thought, then I am rightly subject to judgment.
For that I pray for God’s mercy.
It is for that ...that I pray for God’s indwelling in my heart and being.
It is for that... that I come to this altar to offer myself to the one who offered everything to me.

In the Gospel today we heard how God more readily enters into the hearts of those reconciled with others before they come to his altar.

May we come into His presence, into communion with his Sacred Heart.
May his intent become my intent.
May his will become my action.
May I love as Jesus loves.

How can you be perfect as the Father is perfect?
Allow Jesus to dwell in your heart.
As you do so, you are brought into the very life of God.
Then... you will find yourself sharing God’s love... perfectly.

ⁱ Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 91