

5th Sunday after Pentecost- EF 2013
Matthew 5:20- 24

*“You have heard that it was said... thou shall not kill...
-But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the
judgment.”*

This is the first of the six “Antitheses”, statements made by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. They begin with the phrase, “*You have heard that it was said...*” followed by, “*But I say to you...*”

These are the ones that follow:

*2. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery.
-But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already
committed adultery with her in his heart.*

*3. And it hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of
divorce.
-But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting the cause of
fornication, maketh her to commit adultery and he that shall marry her that is put
away, committeth adultery.*

*4. Again you have heard that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not forswear thyself:
but thou shalt perform thy oaths to the Lord.
-But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven for it is the throne of God... But
let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil.*

*5. You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.
-But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him
also the other.*

And lastly,

*6. You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy
enemy.
-But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them
that persecute and calumniate you:*

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

Here Jesus is not overturning the law; He is bringing it into fulfillment. He is “getting to the root of what it teaches, moving into the realm of internal dispositions from which evil actions proceed.”ⁱ

Getting to the heart: Isn't it said that we judge ourselves by our intentions, but others by their actions? This self-effacing saying reminds us to give others the same benefit of the doubt that we deserve. Don't we feel the victim when our good intentions are misinterpreted? It is our **will** that our heavenly Father sees. I'm heartened that he understands my good intentions even at those times when others may not.

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.

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 which 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 Chinese 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 that uninvited thought, then I am rightly subject to God's 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 withheld nothing from me.

It is before this altar of sacrifice that we hear how God more readily enters into the hearts of those reconciled with others. Then, as we bring our hearts to this 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.

Be reconciled with each other. Come to this altar and open your heart to Christ's life. Take that heart into the world and share the love of God.

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