

# 6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## St. Matthew 5:17-37

Our society has made the idea of “freedom” the same as the idea of “I can do whatever I want as long as no one gets hurt”. It is why the Church is so often ridiculed, because people claim it only cares about the rules and what you cannot do. But the fact is that human beings are social beings that form societies for the protection and the betterment of each person and of the whole group. Rules are what guide us and give us the boundaries which keep us safe from harm and make it possible for us to live with one another. The rules of the Church—which are the laws of God Himself—are given to us for the fulfillment of our humanity. If we want freedom then we want to be fulfilled as human beings, and only God—who created us—knows how to perfect what He created. But before we complain that the Church has too many rules, maybe we should complain that the world has too much sin, and so realise that these rules are only trying to bring us back.

It is true that we have an obligation to follow our conscience. But it must be, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “a well-formed conscience” which is “upright and truthful” (n. 1783). But how do we form our conscience? We do as, the Catechism goes on to say, by the use of “reason” (n. 1783) and by the “Word of God” (n. 1785). That is through faith and reason, the two wings by which, as Pope St. John Paul II said, “the human spirit rises in the contemplation of truth” (*Fides et ratio*).

We should ask ourselves: “Do I try to justify conduct that our Lord considers sinful? Is there a part of my life that I haven’t turned over to God? Are there Church teachings I refuse to accept? Do I strive to form my conscience based on the firm foundation of Catholic truth” (Leon J. Suprenant, Jr.) or do we, as St. Timothy wrote 2,000 years ago, despise “sound doctrine, [and] having itching ears... accumulate for [ourselves] teachers to suit [our] own desires”? (II *Tim.* 4:3).

But still we hear that we should “find our own way” and “follow our heart” and “do what feels right”. More often than not, however, that’s a way of someone saying I don’t accept or believe what the Church teaches and, as an adult, I have the right to do what I like. Well, to an extent, you do have the right to make your own choices, but that doesn’t mean they will be the right choices and certainly not the choices that will lead to your salvation. And anyway, even our society doesn’t believe an individual has the right to do whatever he likes. The fact is, our society dictates more and more and more these days about what we are allowed to do and not do, what we are allowed to say and not say, what we are allowed to think and not think—even when those things fly in the face of God Himself.

We believe that we are sons and daughters of God, and just as children are obliged to follow their parents, we must follow, too, by listening to the teachings and commands of our Holy Mother, the Church. And when we fail, we are given the Sacrament of Penance to give us the assuredness of God’s mercy and of His grace to strengthen us. However, to deliberately act against what God has asked of us is to abandon Christ who said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15). So by keeping His commandments, we show our love for Him. But that is more than just the Ten Commandments, because Christ fulfilled the Old Law with the New Law and founded a Church upon St. Peter, giving the keys of heaven so that whatever he bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven (cf. *Mt.* 16:19).

We live in a society that is fanatically against God and against the Church. It abhors truth and beauty and in what it sees as liberating humanity ends up destroying it’s very soul. But the world is a tempting place and one which preaches an easy life of satisfying our desires. And more and more it is the case that to stand up against the world will get you marginalised, “cancelled”, fired or even imprisoned. But St. James in his epistle warned us, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (4:4). So we have a choice to make: to be a friend of the world and so an enemy of God, or a friend of God and the enemy of the world. It is not easy, because there is so much to lose. So

we have to decide: do I lose my place in the world but gain a place in the eternal kingdom of God, or do I live for this world and lose forever the world to come.

The mission of the Church and so the mission of the Catholic is to go out into the world and to make known all that Christ has taught us, so that this world will find its fulfillment in the world to come. Christ Himself said, "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved" (*Mt. 5:17-19*). And the purpose of it all is virtue and the salvation of immortal souls.