

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 5:17-37; (R1) Sirach 15:15-20; (R2) 1 Corinthians 2:6-10.

Let us not forget we are in Cycle A — the Matthean Year. So every chance I get, I will try to share some insight into Matthew's gospel.

Matthew, for instance, loved to arrange things in groups of seven, as seven was considered the perfect number. Aristotle taught that a perfectly formed head had seven openings; two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and one mouth.

In Sunday's gospel, Matthew presents Jesus as a lawgiver greater than Moses — in seven statements.

Jesus' first statement lays down the principle: "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law ... I have come to fulfill" the Law; and "Your holiness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees." Then Jesus lists six examples of the Law's fulfillment, four of which can be found in this Sunday's gospel — anger, adultery, divorce and oaths; and two in next Sunday's gospel — revenge and love of neighbor.

Jesus said, "I have come to fulfill the Law ..." By "to fulfill," he meant to bring out its full meaning. Laws, like words, have a literal side (what they say) and a spiritual side (what they mean). St. Paul wrote, "The written law kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). To stop at the letter of the law is mere legalism.

The Pharisees crucified Jesus, because they said, "We have a law ..." Millions of unborn infants today are being murdered, "because we have a law."

In our Lord's day, the scribes and Pharisees observed only the letter of the law; they condemned effects, not causes.

Jesus, on the contrary, told them what God really meant. The full meaning of a law against murder included everything that could lead to murder: anger, abusive language, contempt of others. A heart filled with such venom can no more hold love for God than darkness can cohabit with light. Such a heart is unfit for worshipping God. "Change it," Jesus said, "then come to the altar."

Jesus treated adultery the same way. Of course, it is wrong, but so are all the other acts that adulterate the bloodstream of the human race and pollute the gateway to life, which is sex. The lascivious look, the X-rated thoughts and desires — these adulterate the heart and lead to the scarlet sin. Jesus laid the axe to the root of such evil.

As for divorce, there's no such thing. "Who marries a divorced woman commits adultery," plain and simple. Nor does Matthew's phrase "Lewd conduct is a separate case" afford a loophole. "Lewd conduct" very likely referred to concubinage: a couple living with each other as man and wife without the benefit of marriage. Such couples should either get married properly or get a "divorce."

Lastly, Jesus frowned upon not only perjury but all oath taking. For we do not control God. In fact, Matthew says with a twinkle, we cannot even control the greying of our hair. How, then, can we invoke oaths as witnesses? Rather, we ought to let our yes mean yes and our no mean no, and let it go at that. If a man's word were his bond, oaths would be obsolete.

Thus Jesus fulfilled the law by giving it the full interpretation intended by God.

Sirach wrote, "If we choose the commandments, we will have life and happiness; if not, death and unhappiness."

We should, then, follow God's law with the same intensity with which a drowning person underwater frantically struggles for a breath of air.

President Calvin Coolidge died in 1933. Dorothy Parker, unhappy with his do-nothing presidency, commented when she heard about his death, "How can they tell?" Can people tell whether or not we are Christian?

Do we compromise God's laws or lower His standards of morality on the grounds that we are being realistic or compassionate?

Of course, we'll never reach the ideal. But we should never settle for less. Rather, we must strive for it and pray for the grace to arrive at it.



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Obituary

Mary D. Driscoll, former organist

Mary Daly Driscoll, organist at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Leicester for more than 20 years, died Monday, January 12, 1987, at Our Lady of Victory Hospital in Buffalo. She was 81.

Born in Groveland Station, N.Y., she was married to the late John C. Driscoll. For most of her life, she lived in Leicester and was an active member of St. Thomas for more than 60 years. Besides playing the organ, she also belonged to the Rosary

Society. Father Edward B. Zenkel celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial on Friday, January 16.

Mrs. Driscoll is survived by six children: John of Geneseo; Edward of Angola; James of LeRoy; Kathleen Ebert of Nunda; Mary Jean Long of Rochester; and Anne Wall of Lackawanna; as well as 15 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

'Healing Life's Hurts' planned for Blessed Sacrament Church

Blessed Sacrament Parish will present two programs for those interested in spiritual growth and enrichment.

Beginning on February 24, Father Francis Blighton will lead a three-part colloquium on the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, a psychological instrument that focuses on how to identify and use people's various gifts constructively.

Dates and topics are: February 24, "Your Blessings, Your Gifts and You; March 3, "How Others Relate to You;" and March 10, "How You Relate to God."

From March 5 through May 28, Father Blighton will lead a series of healers will offer "Healing Life's Hurts," a 12-session series for those interested in deepening their prayer lives, building new friendships and recovering from painful memories.

At each session, a videotape by Sheila Fabricant and Jesuit Fathers Dennis and Matthew Linn will be shown and prayers for

healing and guided sharing programs will be offered. Meditations and Scripture readings will also be available for participants to use at home. Each session is scheduled from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Registration for both programs is limited to 30 people. Participants in the Meyers-Briggs program must register before February 17. For more information about either program, call Liz Maurer at (716)442-7517.

High school winter fun day scheduled for St. Ambrose

High-school students from St. Ambrose Parish in Rochester are planning a winter fun day Thursday, February 19 from noon to 4 p.m. at Ellison Park.

Organizers ask that participants register by February 13 to allow them to plan ahead. Call Steve Meyer, (716)482-2452, or Cindy Menz, 288-8174, for more information.