

Yes Means Yes

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time February 15, 2026

A priest was preparing a man for his long journey into the night. Whispering firmly, the priest said, “Denounce the devil! Let him know how little you think of his evil.” The dying man said nothing. The priest repeated his order. Still the dying man said nothing. The priest asked, “Why do you refuse to denounce the devil and his evil?” The dying man said, “Until I know where I’m heading, I don’t think I ought to aggravate anybody.”

Don’t want to offend anyone. And so it seems to be in our world. So often we hear that many issues we face in daily life are not black and white, yes or no; but that they are gray – you know it depends, depends on the situation, the person, it’s more complicated. But why the gray?

In our Gospel today, Jesus is affirming God’s laws. What he is doing though is interpreting them for the people and for us. In doing so He is giving us a different perspective of the law and a better perspective of who God is. He is giving the people the knowledge of who God is and who God is not.

It all begins with the definition of law. A law is to provide an ordering of relationships between people; it helps us define our relationships. Too many of us believe laws are restrictive – yes to this, no to that. But that is a shallow way of looking at the law since it never moves to understanding relationships.

Jesus knew that the people were trying to follow the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law. They are focused on the headiness of the law versus the heart of the law. Isn’t that how we sometimes look at the law? I don’t steal so I must be OK. I don’t kill so I must be OK. I don’t commit adultery so I must be OK. But faith is not a check the box thing; it is a living thing which is to move us not to avoid an action, but act in a way that the ultimate commandments are never in play.

Jesus tells us that to say “I don’t steal” is not good enough. Jesus is not saying so much “no” to stealing as he much as he is saying we need to say “yes” to enjoying the gifts given to us and leaving it up to each us to share those gifts with others. When we do and others do likewise for us, there is no stealing.

Jesus tells us that to say “I don’t kill” is not good enough. What leads to killing? - Anger. Jesus wants to stop being angry, to be merciful and reconciling with each other. Without anger, there is no killing. So what if you didn’t kill anyone, what have we done to subdue your own anger and that of others, you know the modern idiom “killing someone with kindness”; the overwhelming helpfulness and kindness that make thou shalt not kill a non-starter. Can you image in our world right now if at protests the rival parties met face to face, ready to shout, ready to fight, ready to hurt the other. But instead one side smiles offers up say a sandwich and some coffee and said “how is your day – let’s talk about this”. Well some would say that’s not fair fighting and they would be right since we are not supposed to be fighting at all.

Jesus tells us to say “I don’t commit adultery” is not good enough. We are to be committed to our spouse in the ways of our vows and do everything in our power never to hurt the object of our love. Living in that way, adultery would never happen for that matter, nor would divorce.

This process of interpreting the meaning of the commandments can be done to each and every one.

Jesus, in this Gospel and everywhere in Scripture tells us our faith is to be a proactive, living faith; one that comes from the heart and not just the head. But God’s law cannot come about without the knowledge of the reason for the law. Having that knowledge allows us to say yes to God even when we momentarily have doubts. When we say yes to God we have a stronger relationship with God and with each other.

When we struggle to say yes to God we wonder “why can’t he be open to change”? After all the world is quite different now than in Jesus’ times - right? It is because God knows all and in that knowledge is truth and truth cannot be open to change. Truth is constant and therefore God’s yes, which is truth, is constant. It is us that have trouble with finding and understanding this truth – and that is why we want compromise. When we don’t get compromise anger grows, mistrust grows and now the 10 commandments come into play.

What makes the difference is our belief system based upon reflection rooted in knowledge. It is in this power of knowledge using God’s Truth as its basis that makes us who we are – it defines us as Catholic.

We see more and more in our world trying to affect our belief system that comes in so many forms – mostly the internet via social media, but there are others. These sources don’t always appeal to our intellect as people seeking the truth as much as they appeal to our feelings of right and wrong. But no where do I find that faith is rooted in feelings.

Knowing what God wants, ascending to how God thinks is our ability to understand God’s yes in the face of an entire society saying no, or at least maybe; distinguishing us as believers versus feelers.

This Wednesday we begin the season of Lent. I will not wear a green vestment again until June 14. We will not sing the Gloria until Easter. We will not proclaim an Alleluia, excepting select solemnities, until Easter. And a Friday hamburger will await me on April 10 at the earliest. These we give up, but what we can get is a sharpening of our journey towards truth – gaining knowledge. Use this time to uncover what God is revealing to us. In the process we hopefully will become a little less angry, a lot more tolerant, more kind and certainly more confident that our yes means yes and our no means no.

Deacon Tom Sheehan
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