

*We Respond*

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**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Be my protector, O God, a mighty stronghold to save me. For you are my rock, my stronghold! Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 118)

**ANTIPHON:** Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

**RESPONSE:** Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

**LECTOR:** They are happy whose life is blameless, who follow God's law! They are happy those who do his will, seeking him with all their hearts. **R.**

**LECTOR:** You have laid down your precepts to be obeyed with care. May my footsteps be firm to obey your statutes. **R.**

**LECTOR:** Bless your servant and I shall live and obey your word. Open my eyes that I may consider the wonders of your law. **R.**

**LECTOR:** Teach me the demands of your statutes and I will keep them to the end. Train me to observe your law, to keep it with my heart. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved.

**Or**

God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, so that all who believe in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Sir 15:15-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

**NEXT WEEK** (7th Sunday, Year A): Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48

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# majellan

## To be better gospel people



12 February 2023 6th Sunday Year A

In today's gospel it seems Jesus is asking too much of us! Following the commandments is not enough. We must also avoid anger, abusive language, lustful thoughts, or taking oaths of any kind! Even calling someone a 'fool' or 'renegade' is an offence. But is Jesus actually asking us to follow an impossible set of commandments ... or is he doing something else?

First, we need to note Jesus' statement in Matthew's Gospel: "I have not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to complete them". The community of disciples Jesus is addressing are all Jews who show great respect for the Law. The pharisees, in particular, are suspicious of Jesus because he doesn't speak much about major Jewish rules such as circumcision, food laws or Sabbath requirements.

At times, they think, Jesus even acts against them!

However, Jesus is not interested in debating them about any particular law. Instead, he challenges their inadequate, superficial – at times hypocritical – thinking that assumes God's favour is won by following the letter of the Law.

In fact, Jesus says the Law does not go far enough unless it highlights love of God and neighbour. So, Jesus reinterprets the Law according to the spirit of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the peacemakers".

But, who among us can claim to be these perfect "Beatitude people"? We are still left with this problem of what seems to be the "impossibility of the gospel" captured in Jesus' statement: "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". Now, Jesus is not naïve. He is perfectly aware that none of us – scribes, pharisees or his own disciples – is able to claim this degree of spiritual conversion to the law of love. So, do we just wash our hands, shrug our shoulders and carry on as before?

Or do we take the second option of turning to the God of love and mercy who challenges us to change our ways, forgives our failures, and assists us to become more effective "gospel people"? To be a gospel person is to be on a journey. This call to deepening conversion is not only needed in the current world of geo-politics; it is also needed in our own Christian communities.

Let us together look to God's revelation in Jesus and the Scriptures so wonderfully summarised in today's reading from St Paul: "The things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, things beyond the human mind, all that God has prepared for those who love him". The gospel is not impossible because it is the wisdom and work of God in process. Let us play our small but important role in bringing the gospel to birth in our families, communities and world.

Gerard Hall SM  
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