



# Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)  
February 12, 2023

## Choose One

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Law, wisdom, or virtue. Choose one. Today's first reading talks about wisdom. Throughout life, options are placed before us. Which should we pick? Life or death? Good or evil? How do we know which one to choose? Actually, we learn to choose through experience, either our own or the experience of those who have gone before us and left us their insights within our traditions—whether social, political, or religious. Some of these

traditions come to us as advice, others as law. One might say that law is really the expression or codification of social, political, or religious traditions. So, to follow the law is really to obey a certain kind of codified wisdom.

When St. Paul speaks about wisdom, he is referring to wisdom that comes from following the directives of God, not merely the insights gained through experience. He calls that a mature wisdom as opposed the wisdom of this age. It is the kind of wisdom we find in Jesus, who lived his life for others, a kind of wisdom that some might consider foolish.

In the Gospel, Jesus insists that he is not abolishing law but fulfilling it. He urges us to go deeper into law and find wisdom, to go even deeper into human wisdom, and there to find virtue. Law deals with exteriors; virtue addresses the inner heart. Law forbids murder; virtue forbids hatred. Where do you live? In law? In wisdom? Or in virtue? Choose one. †



**To follow the law is really to obey a certain kind of codified wisdom.**

## A Word from Pope Francis

By accepting the Law of God in our heart, one understands that, when one does not love one's neighbor, to some extent one kills oneself and others, because hatred, rivalry and division kill the fraternal charity that is the basis of interpersonal relationships. And this applies to what I have said about war and also about gossip, because words kill.

ANGELUS, ROME, FEBRUARY 16, 2020



## Sunday Readings

### Sirach 15:15–20

Before everyone are life and death, / whichever they choose will be given them.

### 1 Corinthians 2:6–10

"What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, / and what has not entered the human heart, / [is] what God has prepared for those who love him...."

### Matthew 5:17–37 or 5:20–22a, 27–28, 33–34a, 37

I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I too casual about rules and laws or too strict?
- What virtues shape my life?



# Justice, Mercy, and the Nature of God

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

(continued from last week)

## Part III

The Gospels recount an incident where Jesus goes to the synagogue on a Sabbath, stands to read, and quotes a text from Isaiah—except he doesn't quote it fully. He omits a part that would have been known to his listeners. It describes Isaiah's vision of what will be the sign that God has finally broken into the world and irrevocably changed things.

For Isaiah, the sign that God is now ruling the earth will be good news for the poor, consolation for the brokenhearted, freedom for the enslaved, grace abundant for everyone, and vengeance on the wicked. Notice, though, when Jesus quotes this, he leaves out the part about vengeance and seeing the wicked punished.

In heaven we will be given what we're owed and more (unmerited gifts, forgiveness we don't deserve, joy beyond imagining), but it seems we will not be given that catharsis we so much want here on earth: the "joy" of seeing the wicked punished.

We know we need God's mercy, but if grace is true for us, it has to be true for everyone. If forgiveness is given to us, it must be given to everybody. And if God does not avenge our misdeeds, God must not avenge the misdeeds of others, either. Such is the logic of grace and such is the love of God, to whom we must attune ourselves.

## Part IV

Some day you will have to face your Maker! We've all heard that phrase. The hour will come when we will stand alone before God with no place to hide, no room to rationalize, and no excuses to offer for our weaknesses and sin. We will stand in a searing light, naked and exposed, and all we ever did, good and bad, will stand with us in that light. That prospect, however vaguely felt, makes for a dark corner in every person's mind.

But searing judgment of our souls is meant to be a daily occurrence, not a single traumatic moment at the end of our lives. We are meant to bring ourselves, with all our complexities and weaknesses, into God's full light every day. Genuine prayer brings us into that searing light.

We are meant to face God like this every day, not just at the moment of our death. So we should set aside time each day to put ourselves into God's presence without words and without images, where—naked, stripped of everything, silent, exposed, hiding nothing, completely vulnerable—we simply sit, full face, before God's judgment and mercy.

By doing this, we will preempt any traumatic encounter at the time of our death and we will begin, here and now, to enjoy more fully God's empathic embrace. †

(continued next week)



*Abiding God, may we be faithful to the law of love your son revealed to the world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

This reflection is an excerpt from *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, available now from Liguori Publications. Visit [Liguori.org](http://Liguori.org) to learn more and review our complete list of *Daybreaks* authors, including Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR; Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA; Fr. Daniel Horan, OFM, and others.

## WEEKDAY READINGS

February 13–18

### Monday, Weekday:

Gn 4:1–15, 25 / Mk 8:11–13

### Tuesday, Sts. Cyril and Methodius:

Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mk 8:14–21

### Wednesday, Weekday:

Gn 8:6–13, 20–22 / Mk 8:22–26

### Thursday, Weekday:

Gn 9:1–13 / Mk 8:27–33

### Friday, Weekday:

Gn 11:1–9 / Mk 8:34–9:1

### Saturday, Weekday:

Heb 11:1–7 / Mk 9:2–13

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