

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Sirach 15:15–20
1 Corinthians 2:6–10
Matthew 5:17–37

MONDAY

Mark 8:11–13
"... no sign will be given to this generation."

TUESDAY

Mark 8:14–21
"Do you not yet understand?"

WEDNESDAY

Mark 8:22–26
"Can you see anything?"

THURSDAY

Mark 8:27–33
"Who do people say that I am?"

FRIDAY

Mark 8:34–9:1
"For those who want to save their life will lose it..."

SATURDAY

Mark 9:2–13
"This is my Son, the Beloved."

Choose Wisely

The question posed in today's readings is: "How does a wise person live in harmony with God's plan for the world?" Jesus helps us to understand the depths of the spirit that underpins the Law. As Sirach reminds us, we have the freedom to choose fire or water, life or death. Jesus challenges us to make this radical choice based upon love of God and neighbor.

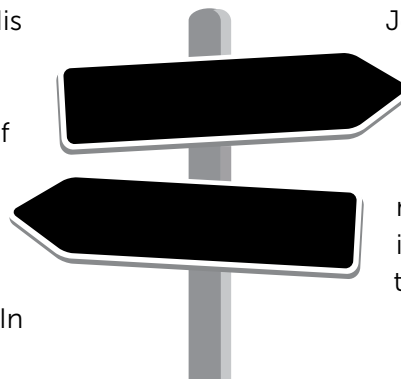
In this passage Matthew begins by upholding respect for the Torah and its 613 precepts of the Law, but invites us to move into the heart of wisdom. Jesus presents a new order. His is a call to go beyond mere compliance with the Law to an extraordinary conversion of the heart. This is impossible without the grace of the Spirit.

This gospel passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In

it Matthew follows the literary structure wherein Jesus states the old law, "You have heard the commandment . . ." Then Jesus offers a practical illustration of what is being asked. Finally, he gives his command for holiness, which touches the depth of conversion called for by the Law.

This Gospel presents four commandments regarding: murder, adultery, divorce, and oaths. The passage for next week will cover two more areas of the law. These are known as the six antitheses. Six times in a row,

Jesus contrasts ideas about the meaning of the Law by making parallel statements and moving more deeply into the heart of the matter.



The Faith of the Church

In the document on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops upheld human freedom as the only way people can turn themselves toward good. However, they warn that in cherishing our freedom, we must not think that this gives us the right to do anything we like. Rather, genuine freedom is nurtured as we discover the image of God in humanity and act out of respect for human dignity (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 17).



Questions of the Week

Matthew helps us to understand that Jesus does not make new laws. Rather, he brings us to a new vision based on love for God and others. This radical shift in the freedom to choose out of love is only possible through the infinite capacity of God's grace and our potential for wisdom.

Adults

How does Jesus' new law of love move me to a deeper understanding of the commandments?

Children

How will I act out of love for God and others this week?

Responding to God's Word . . .

Holiness for the wise means making choices based on morality. For example, Jesus takes the law regarding murder and shows us that anger lies at its root. He calls us to uncover the anger in our hearts and challenges us to a change of heart wherein we treat all persons with dignity, respect, and love.

We are challenged to go beyond the mere commandments and uncover our internal motivation for our actions and words. The New Order, which Jesus begins, takes us into not only the avoidance of sin, but a radical pursuit of the good. A new note

has been struck with emphasis on interiority and radical response.

Interiority, the inner nature of the person, is grown and matured in the Christian community, which Paul refers to as the Body of Christ. As members of Christ, we can choose charity over ego; faithfulness over lust; truth over falsehood and life over death. Our journey of faith grows us into the wisdom to choose freely for the sake of God's Kingdom of justice and peace. We strive to internalize and manifest the law of love through the choices before us each day.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Show your gratitude for the members of your family by acknowledging their goodness rather than taking them for granted.

In the workplace or in school. Make a direct effort to treat others with dignity and respect, particularly those with whom you may disagree.

In the community. Get to know the older adults in your parish or neighborhood and draw upon their gifts and wisdom.



Meditation Moment

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi tells how in his student days in South Africa he was drawn to Jesus. One Sunday, Gandhi writes, he went to a Christian church. He was stopped at the entrance and told that if he desired to attend services, he was welcome to do so in a church reserved for black people. Gandhi did not pursue the matter further.

For reflection . . .

What is one way that my daily behavior might better reflect what I profess on Sunday: we are one family under God?

PEOPLE LOOK AT US THE REST OF THE WEEK TO SEE WHAT WE REALLY MEANT BY OUR WORSHIP TOGETHER ON SUNDAY.

ANONYMOUS

FROM VISION BY MARK LINK, SJ

The Law of Love

Place the law of love deep within our hearts. Grace us to live that deep connection with the entire Body of Christ. Inspire us to make choices with the wisdom of a holiness that reflects your love for all. Imbed in us the truth of human dignity that we might treat others with charity. Plant the seeds of your New Law within our hearts and give us the courage and wisdom to live in that order. Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart."

Psalm 119:34

Profile in Faith

Saint Matthew

Matthew was among the early followers of Jesus. He was also known as Levi, the former tax collector. His ministry was to the Jewish community. Thus, the Gospel of Matthew stresses Jesus' fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies and obedience to and preservation of biblical law. His feast day is September 21.

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