



Enduring Validity of the Law

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES struggled with the question of their relationship with the law of Moses as they entered the new era inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The evangelist Matthew tried to settle this issue for his own community by showing them how Jesus viewed that law and understood his role in relation to it.

In Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly defines his relationship with the law: "I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." Thus, he affirms the law's enduring validity for Christians in every age.

The essence of the law is love. The original intention of the Lawgiver is to lead his covenant-partner Israel into a loving relationship with him, with the Chosen People's fellow human beings and with the rest of creation. But like an ancient painter's original masterpiece which passed from one patron to another and was retouched by other hands and overlaid with paint and dust, the original intention of the Lawgiver was obscured by the way it had been interpreted by the so-called experts of the law, that is, the scribes and the Pharisees. Their meticulous analysis of words and formulations locked up the spirit of the law, so that its intended meaning was kept beyond the reach of ordinary people. Thus, obedience to the law, as interpreted by these law experts, was reduced to mere compliance with the letter of

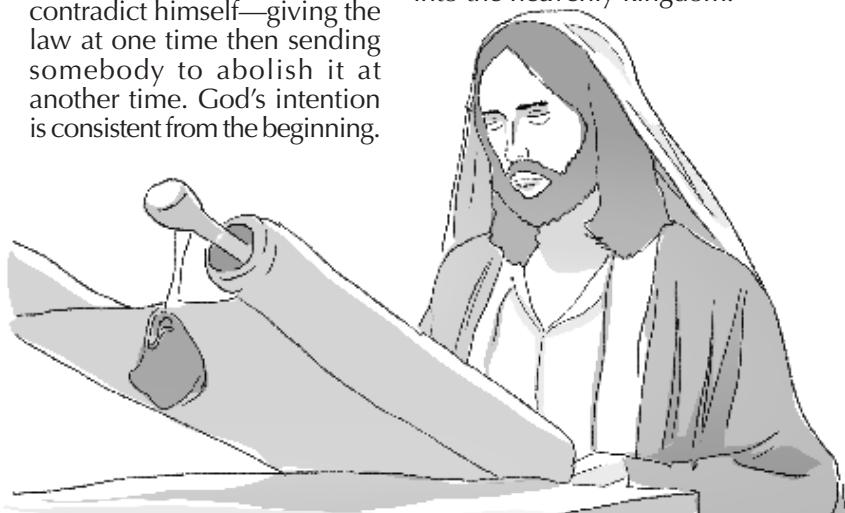
Sr. Bernardita Dianzon, FSP

the law and attention to little details, often to the neglect of what is essential. Yet they held on to the illusion that this manner of obeying the law led to righteousness.

Jesus comes from the Lawgiver and knows fully the Lawgiver's intention. Jesus alone can pierce through the letter and formulation of the law and reveal its divinely intended meaning. He presents himself as the ultimate authority and definitive interpreter of the law. The role of Jesus can be likened to that of the restorer of the ancient painter's masterpiece—the one who will remove the layers of paint and dust and dirt that have covered the original work, allowing its pristine beauty to emerge. "I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." The implication of this pronouncement is great, for it affirms that God does not contradict himself—giving the law at one time then sending somebody to abolish it at another time. God's intention is consistent from the beginning.

The law traces out the path of love and fidelity for his covenant-partner Israel. The claim of Jesus "not to abolish but to fulfill" is strategically placed by Matthew before the series of contrasts that come in verses 21-48—"You have heard ... but I say to you..."—in order to dispel any misconception that Jesus is putting himself in opposition to the law rather than setting its spirit free from imprisonment in the letter. This spirit, which is love, is placed at the heart of the redefined commandments. Their radically intensified formulation by Jesus points to the new kind of righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Jesus, the Messiah, is the final goal of the whole law. In his life, teaching, passion, death and resurrection, he embodied the fulfillment of the law and opened the floodgates of grace that will enable believers to live righteous lives and be admitted into the heavenly kingdom.



THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps 31 (30):3-4)

(Recited when there is no opening song)

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.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—Jesus tells us that mere observance of God's law does not make us his true followers. Observance of the divine law must spring from inner conviction. May today's Mass make us grow in love, a love that is free, responsible, and self-giving.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. *(Pause)*

All—I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, *(strike your breast)* through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All—Amen.

P—Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (Sir 15:15-20) *(Sit)*

We are free to choose between a life of faithfulness and a life of sin. But God, who knows everything, has prepared life for the virtuous and death for sinners.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

IF YOU CHOOSE you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; he has set before you fire and water to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him. Immense

is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power, and all-seeing. The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed. No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin.

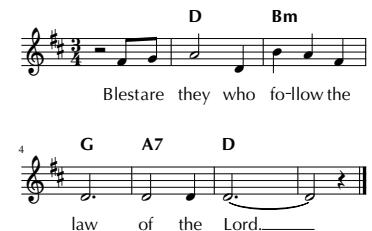
—The word of the Lord.

All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 119)

R—Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

E.J. Reyes, ssp



Blest are they who follow the law of the Lord

1. Blessed are they whose way is blameless,/ who walk in the law of the LORD./ Blessed are they who observe his decrees,/ who seek him with all their heart. **(R)**

2. You have commanded that your precepts/ be diligently kept./ Oh, that I might be firm in the ways/ of keeping your statutes! **(R)**

3. Be good to your servant, that I may live/ and keep your words./ Open my eyes, that I may consider/ the wonders of your law.. **(R)**

4. Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,/ that I may exactly observe them./ Give me discernment, that I may observe your law/ and keep it with all my heart. **(R)**

Second Reading (1 Cor 2:6-10)

The wisdom of God is his loving plan to save us through Jesus. This wisdom that proclaims the salvific merit of the cross of Christ.

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers

of this age who are passing away. Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: *What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him*, this God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

—The word of the Lord.
All —Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (cf. Mt 11:25) (*Stand*)

All—Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37) (*Short Form*)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS SAID to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.* But I say to you, whoever is angry with brother will be liable to judgment.

"You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery.* But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.* But I say to you, let not swear at all. Let your

'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

—The Gospel of the Lord.
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (*Sit*)

Profession of Faith (*Stand*)

All—I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (at the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P—Let us ask our heavenly Father the grace to discern and choose good over evil, to live godly lives rather than what the world offers. Full of trust we pray:

R—Loving God, hear our plea.

C—May our Church and political leaders follow the spirit of the Law more than the literal interpretation of it in their decisions and judgment. We pray: (**R**)

C—May we shun anger and vengeance in our dealings with one another so as to break the cycle of violence that bring nothing but destruction and grief to all involved. We pray: (**R**)

C—May we respect the dignity of each person so as not to look at anyone as an object of inordinate desires. We pray: (**R**)

C—May we be men and women of our word, faithful to our vows and promises before God and our fellow human beings. We pray: (**R**)

C—May our departed loved ones now enjoy everlasting happiness that the Lord has prepared for those who love him. We pray: (**R**)

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and for our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: (**R**)

P—Eternal God, hear our plea as we strive to discern the mysteries of the Kingdom which you have lovingly revealed to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts
(*Stand*)

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—May this oblation, O Lord, we pray, cleanse and renew us and may it become for those who do your will the source of eternal reward.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

Preface (Ordinary Time VII)

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.
P—Lift up your hearts.
All—We lift them up to the Lord.
P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For when your children were scattered afar by sin, through the Blood of your Son and the power of the Spirit, you gathered them again to yourself, that a people, formed as one by the unity of the Trinity, made the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, might, to the praise of your manifold wisdom, be manifest as the Church.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels, we praise you, and with joy we proclaim: All—Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All—We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...
P—Deliver us, Lord...
All—For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion (Kneel)

P—Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under

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my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Cf. Ps 78 [77]:29-30)

They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved.

Prayer after Communion
(Stand)

P—Let us pray. (Pause)

Having fed upon these heavenly delights, we pray, O Lord, that we may always long for that food by which we truly live.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P—Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

Be gracious to your people, O Lord, and do not withhold consolation on earth from those you call to strive for heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

P—May he free you always from every distress and confirm your hearts in his love.

All—Amen.

P—So that on this life's journey you may be effective in good works, rich in the gifts of hope, faith and charity, and may come happily to eternal life.

All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—The Mass is ended. Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

All—Thanks be to God.

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