

6th Sunday (A)

15th February 2026

‘You have heard how it was said ...’

Ecc 15: *He has not commanded anyone to be ungodly.*

1Cor 2: *a wisdom God decreed before the ages for our glory.*

Mt 5:17–37: *it was said to those of old ... but I say to you ...*

Let’s just hear again some of those uncompromising words we heard in the 1st Reading, a few minutes ago, from ch. 15 of the rather long Wisdom book, *Sirach* (the book of *Ecclesiasticus*, from the 2nd c. BC):

*If you desire, you will keep the commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter of choice. ...
For great is the wisdom of the Lord ...
He has not commanded anyone to be ungodly,
and He has not given anyone permission to sin.*

It reminds us that God’s holy Word is meant to be *challenging, as well as consoling*. He wants us to take seriously our lives of holiness — and He respects our freedom to be conscientious determiners of our actions — and that whilst we trust so completely in His great mercy, we also need to have a real abhorrence of sin. Our reliance on His forgiveness should not lead us to laxity; but nor should our appreciation of His holy laws against sin lead us to despair. We rely on the life of the Spirit at work in

our souls to bring us the peace, calm, and discernment that allow us to navigate, without undue anxiety, the strait and narrow road between sinfulness and scrupulousness.

In this regard, it’s a tremendously important passage which we’ve just heard in the Gospel there, from the heart of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’: Jesus takes some of the teachings of the Old Law against grave sins, 3 of the 10 Commandments given to Moses on Mt Sinai after the Exodus — *Do not kill ... Do not commit adultery ... do not break your oath ...* — deepening those teachings and refining them, redefining them in new terms, according to a much higher, Christian, standard.

In so doing, of course, He has every right, for He is the Son of God — the *Λογος* or ‘Mind’ of God; the Wisdom of God personified — teaching us what is good and right. The Jewish Law was a venerable set of teachings which had come down to the Jews of Jesus’s day from of old — from Moses, indeed, many of them. Of course Jesus respected the Law for what it had achieved, helping the Jews over many centuries to know and honour

God and neighbour, but He also knew that at times the Law had got distorted, and that the love of God itself had not always been at the heart of those who had taught the Law and outwardly kept it. He says openly that He has “*not come to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to complete them.*” In this powerful passage today, in Mt 5, He makes His authority felt: He shows us what the commandments really mean, and He shows us that as Christians we are to keep them *not in a cursory fashion*, not in as minimal a way as possible, but in a way that is generous and full.

Sometimes, as a priest, one would have someone come to Confession, who starts off ... [I am not breaking the seal of Confession here, I speak generically, not specifically] ... “Well, I’ve not really done very much wrong: I haven’t killed anybody; I’ve not committed adultery; I’ve not stolen anything.” Great! I’m so happy about that! But ... it begs a big ‘but ...’! I think we can go a bit deeper!

The 10 Commandments are there to be kept; they are given us by the Lord so we can be happy, and help others

to be happy — hence the prohibitions on killing, on adultery, on dishonesty ... These things are basic building blocks of morality, and God knows so well that we need these commands. But the commands are not there just for the keeping on a superficial level, as if that were the end of it; they’re not ‘commands for commands’ sake’ — i.e. literally kept, box ticked! The teaching of Christ is to give us a sure and certain guide to happiness. We strive to keep the commands of the Lord because we love Him, and we know that only He can give us the fullness of life. We do not want to sin, because sin leads us away from Him, away from happiness, and away from heaven. The rich young man in another place in the Gospel (Mt 19) said to Jesus, “*Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?*” — and He answers, in the first instance, “*If you would enter life, keep the commandments.*” There is no question. To live a truly Christian life, we must keep the commandments, and if we break them then we should seek the abundant forgiveness from the Lord that He also offers to His people, whom He knows can be weak.

We should, then, truly examine our lives more deeply as we hear the beautiful but challenging words of Christ today. His Sermon on the Mount echoes down the centuries; He didn't deliver these words only for the few on the hillside above Lake Galilee, did He? He gave them for all humanity of all time.

1. **“You shall not murder”** ... Defend life, protect life, especially the life of the unborn; make sure you counsel and assist anyone you ever come across to keep their baby if they are tempted to destroy that infant life. I'm sure we have all been appalled by the dreadful decision of our House of Commons last year to propose the administration of lethal drugs to the terminally ill and dying! (At the present moment, valiant members of the House of Lords are fighting this legislation with a detailed critique of this dangerous Bill, and we pray that the Bill manages never to reach the Statute Book). But this is what Europe has come to, that it kills not only children in the womb, but the sick too, instead of caring for them with love and tenderness to their natural end. *We cannot have*

any part in this, as the Lord insists. We must defend human life and play no part in killing.

2. **“You shall not commit adultery”** ... Jesus extends this divine command of marital fidelity to encompass all aspects of the dignity with which we treat all those of the opposite sex. No demeaning or dirty talk. And protection of ourselves, and others, especially our children, from all that is immoral in the ways we look at others. On the internet, for example, this is a pressing need: every one of us must make sure that our viewing of the internet is safeguarded from what opposes the Gospel. Healthy friendships, good marriages, chaste dating, and good moral relationships are all helped when our minds are pure, and not full of impure images. We should all make this a priority, to protect our souls from being sullied by the insidious, addictive, evil that is out there. Jesus reminds us to be looking at others in a way that is not lustful or objectifying the other — it's very practical advice as we go about our daily activities— but it also extends to our speaking about others, or about others' appearances: again,

is it clean, is it kind, is it holy?

3. **“You shall not swear falsely”** ... Honesty is important: not breaking one’s oaths, not betraying one another, not talking behind one another’s backs. Gossip, as we know, can be deadly. Speaking cleanly, too is very important: saying, as Jesus indicates so pertinently, just “‘yes,’ if you mean ‘yes’; ‘no’ if you mean ‘no’.” Adding all sorts of swear words and crude language to our speech needs to be cut out, for what comes out of our mouths expresses our inner self. *What we say is who we are!* Our speech needs to be true — always truthful, even in the small things — and clean, so that we are recognised by the very way we speak for being sons and daughters of God.

Let’s pay attention to the challenges that today — February 2026 — the wise words of Christ in His Sermon on the Mount 2000 years ago, make on us. Let’s be clear: *Christ didn’t ever waste His words*; He wants us to live well, blessed and happy. We can only do this if, full of love for Him as the Son of the living God, we worship Him and desire with our whole life to listen to Him, obeying

Him, and avoiding sin. Allow yourself to be really challenged by the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus with infinite kindness reinforces, reiterates, and refines those commandments: the 5th Commandment, *You shall not murder*; the 6th Commandment, *You shall not commit adultery*; the 8th Commandment, *You shall not swear falsely*. Go back over this text later today; take it away with you, re-read it, sit with it, and reflect on it: does this sacred teaching echo my own daily practice of life, or does it not? Allow Him to change you, for the better, and for ever. Let Him convert your heart to Him today; that you cling to His every word, His loving commands; His life-giving invitation to be good and holy.

Whoever does them, and teaches them, will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.