

*Readings*

Sir 15:15-20

Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

1 Cor 2:6-10

Mt 5:17-37 *or* 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

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Choices by nature are somewhat difficult because we are being pulled in different directions.

Sometimes the choices are between two goods. Often choices are between God's will and our human cravings, which are not always God's will. How do we make choices?

In the first reading from Sirach, we are told that if we choose to keep God's commandments we will be saved, and if we trust in God we will live.

This is fine, but in the gospel Jesus goes another step. He instructs us that just keeping "the letter of the law" is not enough. Just because we didn't physically kill someone, or didn't commit adultery, or didn't tell a false oath, we are not let off the hook. In coming "to fulfill the law," Jesus is telling us we are not to emotionally kill someone, not to look at someone lustfully, and not even to swear.

Wow, this is a long way from "an eye for an eye and a tooth or a tooth" which at one time was the norm and considered acceptable.

I think what Jesus is telling us is to choose to respect every human being with dignity. This is a very familiar phrase, but I think it means that we see each person as God sees all of God's sons and daughters. We see each person who has feelings and emotions which are fragile and which we can

either easily affirm or easily destroy. We are to see and treat each person as precious, no matter the person's origin, situation or beliefs.

Maybe this is what Saint Paul is referring to in the second reading today when he tells the people in Corinth that he speaks of a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age. He says he speaks of God's wisdom.

Maybe this is what St. Augustine is referring to when he says "love God and do what you want." If we love God, all we want is what is best for all of God's creation. Consequently, what we want is the common good and not our own individual good. This becomes a reality when we treat each person with the respect and dignity each one deserves.

Maybe this is what Cardinal Bernadine is referring to when he speaks of "the seamless garment." I believe he means all life is valuable, no matter the age, the situation or the circumstances.

Because it's not always easy to do God's will, rather than our own, God has given us resources to help us. He has given us each other by whom we can be inspired and encouraged. He has given us the Eucharist, his Body and Blood, to nourish and strengthen us to make our choices as spiritually mature human beings.

In a few moments we are going to say, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." If we make our choices based on the respect and dignity of each person with whom we interact, we will be saved and live forever with God as we hear in the first reading from Sirach.