

“Choices”

The wisdom of Sirach says: “If you choose you can keep the commandments. They will save you... Before you are life and death, whichever you choose will be given you.”

Paul tells the brothers and sisters in Corinth: “God has revealed wisdom to us through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit searches out all things, even things of God.”

Last week, Father Major talked about a voice he heard inside him which beckoned him to make a choice to “go to the deep water.” Over and over: when he was discerning his vocation, when he was asked where he wanted to serve, and again, which mission he felt called to. Always, he heard: “Go to the deep water.”

Jesus was a good Jew who not only ratifies what the Law and prophets say, but tells us to go deeper in our observance. We are to go beyond the laws and prohibitions to something deeper. Jesus is asking us to make choices, choices that bring life to ourselves and others. Jesus invites us to enter in a profound respect for all of our sisters and brothers.

Jesus invites us to make a deliberate choice to move beyond the law into love.

Jesus invites us to be in community with one another. It’s not and never was just about personal moral behavior. It’s about how we live together and work together as a community.

It’s about how we live together as nations, ethnic groups, institutions, churches, neighborhoods.

Regarding adultery and divorce, the law gave parameters, it was minimalistic. But Jesus says no person is to be treated as an object, whether it is as a sex object or a marketing object or a tool in a corporate plan for profits.

It’s about choices. One person says he is against trafficking but goes on line to look at pornography while another joins a committee to raise the awareness of human trafficking and slavery.

One business manager is generous and affirming to the employees while another let’s go of those working longest for the firm.

It’s about choices.

Regarding retaliation and violence, the Gospel invites us to treat one another with mutual care and respect.

The Gospel invites us to active nonviolence. We are called to put an end to the ways of and end preparations for war and violence.

While flying one time, I sat next to an army man on furlough who was going home. I asked what he did. He said: “I am on the front line, infantry. My job is to shoot to kill.” It was all matter of fact. Another man told me of how it was during a plane trip that he turned to his boss and shocked him by saying: “I am resigning from my job. I am no longer at peace in myself.” He was a negotiator, whose salary was in the 6 digits for negotiating defense contracts between GE and the US Government.

It's a matter of choices.

We are not called to be passive in the face of injustice and evil. We are called to be active and to respond to love and respect for the other.

Instead of anger and divisiveness, Gospel calls us to engage in the work of reconciliation.

Two sisters came and went into their dying mother's bedroom in a way that they would never be together. An old grudge kept them from seeing or talking to one another. They thought they were attending to their mother when all she really wanted before she died was for them to be reconciled.

It's a matter of choices.

The son of a man who had a problem with anger management often hid in the closet when his father went into another tirade. Finally the father went for counseling. His father was a collector of model trains. Money was saved for a very long time to buy a Lionel engine in mint condition. One day, the son was playing with it when he spilled paint remover over the engine. The son broke into tears of fear and dread. His father, took a deep breath, quelled his anger and said: I know we both feel bad about this accident. But son, I want you to know you are worth more than all the trains in the world." It's about the choices we make.

This Sermon on the Mount which we heard from Jesus today is to guide all our choices for walking the way of love, not hate; peace not violence; forgiveness and anger; integrity not falsehood; generosity not selfishness.

A Cherokee elder sitting with his grandchildren told them, "In every life there is a terrible fight – a fight between two wolves.

One is evil: he is fear, anger, envy, greed, arrogance, self-pity, resentment and deceit.

The other is good: joy, serenity, humility, confidence, generosity, truth, gentleness, and compassion."

A child asked: Grandfather, which wolf will win?"

The elder looked him in the eye, "The one you feed."