

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

February 15-16, 2020

Readings: Sirach 15:15-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

I knew it the very instant the installer unrolled the carpet- too light a color! If you have ever selected from a large pallet of carpet squares the size of a credit card, you know how daunting it can be. How are we supposed to know how this will look in a room? Choosing paint is even more difficult. Choose from 1,500 colors advertises one national brand- Just show me photos of completed rooms and we'll go from there.

Our life is a daily series of choices, the first often being whether or not we hit the snooze button. Sirach gives us food for thought about our choices, while our Gospel review the centrality of the commandments. Sirach teaches us about choices, important choices. He notes: "Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him." Indeed, we have set before us **life and prosperity, death and doom. We are given the ultimate choice; it is not made for us.** Our choices today affect us for the rest of our lives.

Moses was merely was laying out the choices more clearly, but ultimately it was not his choice. It was the people's choice. We are responsible for our own choices and ultimately our own happiness. Whether Ben Sirach or Moses, the great leaders in Biblical times put the question back to the people. You, you must choose. We cannot do it for you.

In today's Gospel, Jesus "declares that he has not come to abolish the old law but to fulfill it. By sending the Holy Spirit, he will write the law in the hearts of believers, that is, in the place where personal and responsible decisions are made. Here is that "something more" which will enable people to accept the law **not** as an **external command**, but rather as an **inner choice**. Thus, the law promulgated by Christ is a law of 'holiness' (cf. Mt 5,18); it is the supreme law of love (cf. Jn 15,9-12).<sup>1</sup> (emphasis added)

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<sup>1</sup> Homily by St. John Paul II, 14 February 1999, in a pastoral visit to St. Fulgentius Parish in Rome.

It is also the case that we live with our choices, both the good and the bad ones. The Church is no different, as we give thanks for the significant contributions to society over the centuries, in charitable works, in sacred music, art, architecture, science and theology.

At the same time, the Church acknowledges the dark shadows brought about by the poor leadership over the years. At the dawn of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II acknowledged in the form of a litany “the betrayal of the Gospel committed by some of our brothers, especially in the second millennium.” Wearing the purple vestments for Lent, he said in his homily: “Recognizing the deviations of the past serves to reawaken our consciences to the compromises of the present.” It is a purification of consciences and examination of conscience that needs to be ongoing.

And yet, when we focus on the power and significance of our choices, we know in our hearts that with God’s grace operative in our souls, we have the power to choose life, to choose the good, the true and the beautiful. When we do this, we find true happiness and true meaning in our lives. And we also seek to reach out beyond ourselves to help others.

This week’s bulletin contains an insert about the Catholic Services Appeal. Next weekend is Commitment Weekend. Catholics too make choices about their charitable dollars and I urge you to take a good look at the information in the insert. This year’s Appeal targets 20 designated ministries.

Today’s choice for the faith is much more intentional. It is much less frequently done out of societal pressure or because it is the *in-vogue* decision. Far from it. Intentional choices today require courage. Our choice for God carries with it some key implications. As we heard in our Gospel—let our “Yes” mean “Yes.” May we choose God each and every day and follow wherever He leads us.