

Cycle A Homily
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 5:17-37
February 12-13, 2011

It is amazing what a doctor can learn about a person's physical health simply by listening to a person's heart.

The doctor can tell if the heart valves are working properly. The doctor can tell if the heart is pumping too fast or too slow. The doctor can learn so many things, and makes recommendations concerning what needs to be done to maintain this vital organ in as healthy a manner as medically possible.

Valentine's Day is coming on Monday. So many cards feature hearts. And here, we are not talking about the vital organ that pumps blood throughout the body. We refer to the very core of ourselves in all our most vibrant aspects. Consider how we talk about the heart in everyday language. We talk about the heart as the seat of loving, of compassion, of tenderness, of courage. We say things like, "I love you with all of my heart." We say things like "Deep in my heart, I know this is what I should do." We say things like "My heart goes out to those whose homes were damaged by the terrible storms."

When we first listen to today's Gospel, it may not seem like it is a message from the heart of God. But it is! Jesus sat down with His disciples and told them what it means to follow His path. Jesus tells them and He tells us that He doesn't expect us to follow a bunch of laws in an external way then boast about how righteous we are. No, Jesus **GETS TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER**. He breathes new life into the Law of God. He tells us what is in God's heart.

God knows what is in our hearts. God listens to our hearts and knows we can keep the commandment not to kill one another. But if we still hate and despise someone else, we're not reflecting the love that is in the heart of God.

God knows what is in our hearts. God listens to our hearts and knows we can avoid the sin of adultery. But if we still disrespect others and treat them as

if they are not fully human, we're not reflecting the love that is in the heart of God.

God knows what is in our hearts. God listens to our hearts and knows we can keep from making a false oath. But if we still manipulate others with our words, leading others to go astray by what we say and fail to say, allowing our words to be meaningless rather than letting our yes mean yes and our no mean no, we're not reflecting the love that is in the heart of God.

Even though we are made in the image and likeness of God, our hearts do not keep time with the beating of God's heart.

So, what is the only way can be truly righteous in God's sight? We must recognize that at times our hearts do not keep time with God's heart. We must let God change our hearts.

God's heart is a rich treasure of mercy. God's love is a love that keeps inviting us to let Him transform us to be more and more like Jesus Christ.

St. Leo the Great used to challenge the Christians of the fifth century by saying, "Remember your dignity."

Leo preached: "Let the saint exult that he draws near to victory. Let the sinner be glad that he is invited to pardon."

All of us, who are called to be saints and have at times fallen short of this calling, also remember the dignity God enables us to share; it is the dignity of being fully alive with the life of Jesus Christ. The same challenge is there for us today. We are not fully alive because we don't murder or don't take a false oath. We're fully alive because we are convinced that there is nothing more important than letting the way we live reflect the very life of Christ.

And that, my friends, is the heart of the matter!