

## VI TRINITY 2019

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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We're often told not to go to bed angry with someone. When we do...we risk losing sleep...because we spend the night mulling over just how angry we are...instead of winding down and getting the sleep we need.

Anger left unchecked can lead into outright hatred. Anger and hatred feed on themselves...and neither is consistent with God's will for us. When the circumstances are just right...hatred can lead us into committing murder...in the heart!

This morning's Gospel is Jesus' explicit commentary on The Sixth Commandment: "Do not commit murder". Murder is the "unlawful and premeditated killing of one human being by another." However, Jesus takes the Sixth Commandment and applies it on a much broader level...to include what we say to and how we treat another person.

The religious experts of Jesus' time held a literalistic view of the Ten Commandments. They believed they were keeping the Sixth Commandment as long as they didn't actually go out and intentionally and with malice kill another person. To their way of thinking...disliking and hating another person didn't violate the Sixth Commandment.

Jesus says this kind of thinking about the Sixth Commandment is seriously flawed. All of the Ten Commandments concern the disposition of our hearts toward God...and toward each other. Hearts predisposed to unjustifiable and uncontrolled anger are ignoring the Summary of the Law we hear at every Mass...*love God above all else and love others in the same way we want to be loved.*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us if we want to go to heaven, we have to be more religious than the religious experts who claim to know everything. We are being faithful to the Ten Commandments when we do more than give God's Commandments lip service.

We are being faithful to the Ten Commandments when our hearts are predisposed to loving others and doing good works. It does matter what we think about others and how we treat them.

There is such a thing as justifiable anger. We have to make certain we aren't angry just to be angry and let it take over and control our lives. Unchecked anger toward others is like murdering them in our hearts. We check that anger when we take the Summary of the Law seriously...and let God's Holy Spirit reorient our hearts toward loving him and our neighbors (that's everybody) as we should.

Jesus also tells us we need to be careful about what we say to others especially when we are upset or angry. Words can hurt others...we need to think about the consequences of saying something in anger...better to cool off and try to work things out...we might just save a friendship.

What about calling someone a *fool*? That's not such a bad word...is it? We tend to use the word *fool* today to describe our opinion about a person's intelligence. *Foolishness* is rebellion against God. In Holy Scripture...a *fool* is one whose words and actions show contempt for God and his Commandments. A *fool*...is an *atheist*.

Agnostics and atheists deserve our prayers not our condemnation. Only God knows the true disposition of their hearts just as he knows the disposition of ours. Calling someone a fool today may not provoke the response it did in Jesus' time...but we must never talk about another person in an unjust, hurtful or slanderous way...all of which are forms of anger.

The Ten Commandments are not God's suggestions for a better life...although when we try to keep them things go better. They are not scorecards to show how good we are or how faithful we are. The Ten Commandments tell us what the disposition of our hearts should be...and often are not.

Do we have a problem with someone? Jesus tells us to go and make peace with them now...while we have time...don't wait until it's too late. We are about to confess our shortcomings before God and declare our intent to lead a new life from this moment forward in love and charity with our neighbors.

Let's try to remember...everyone is our neighbor!

