

Homily
Tuesday of the 11th Week in OT
June 18, 2024

“You have heard it said...” This is the fifth time we have heard this said over the past several daily Masses. Don’t kill/don’t be angry; Don’t commit adultery/don’t lust in your heart; Don’t take a false oath/don’t swear at all; An eye for an eye/ turn the other cheek; and today – Love your neighbor and hate your enemy/ love your enemies. Jesus explains that our intentions are as important as our actions. And He wraps all this up with, “...be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Mt 5:48

I’ve always struggled with ‘be perfect’ because, well, just look at me. I’m anything but perfect. And try as I may, I still fail in my attempts to be perfect. Then I’ve justified my ‘imperfections’ by saying that “it’s all about the struggle.” And there is some truth in that. But then I looked more closely at the word ‘perfect.’

The definition of the word ‘perfect’ is, “completely free from faults or defects.” But this doesn’t help me in my efforts to comply with the command Jesus gives us in today’s Gospel. The root of the word perfect comes from the Latin *perfectus* which means ‘completed’ or ‘through, completely.’

God is telling us, through the Word Jesus has proclaimed in the last several verses from Matthew’s fifth chapter, that we need to take our efforts to the next level. Through Baptism, we are members of the family of God. Through Confirmation, we are strengthened in the fullness of grace through the Holy Spirit. And through the Eucharist, we are nourished and truly become one with Christ and with each other. And in this fullness of community, we are called to completeness in God’s command to not only act in holiness, but to be holy, in not only our actions, but also in our words and in our thoughts.

To be truly complete, we must abandon all earthly desires and empty ourselves so we can become fully, completely members of the family of God, the body of Christ. And we do this best when we come to Mass, participate fully, in the Word proclaimed and in the Sacrament we are about to receive. Then we are dismissed to go into the world to be Christ for the world. Then we are truly complete.