

The Commandments are for Life.

Fr Louis Fowóyò

At a penance service, a priest gave a copy of the ten commandments to those who were in attendance. As he read along, he asked them to mark right whichever they think they have kept faithfully. And mark wrong the ones they have not kept.

- At the end of the exercise, he asked them to signify if there is anyone that has not fallen into any of the commandments. There were no hands raised.
- He further asked until he said if there is anyone that has transgressed nine out of the ten. There were no hands raised. Then he said how many have failed in all ten? Almost the whole congregation laughing and looking at each other raised their hands.
- There are two parts to the commandments. First is not to physically commit it, the other is not to commit it by desire. Many times, we are guilty of the second part but we take it for granted and consider it to be small or nothing at all.
- What we consider little and take no cognizance of, can lead us to lose friendship with God. This is the reason why it is important to look up to heavens for strength at all times.
- A passionate heart is concern and it is the only one that urges us to seek the compassionate face of God.
- Redemption is the salvation of the totality of a human person. It goes to show that both the thought and action of everyone must go through the process all the time. This is where the new person is.

1st Reading: Sirach 15:15-20; the prophet lays before us the free will to do or not to do what God has commanded.

- “If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; He has set before you fire and water to which you choose, stretch forth your hand.”
- Our life is ordered according to the choices we make. A good choice leads to a healthy life while a bad choice leads to destruction.
- It is not the desire of God that we should make any wrong choice. He is rather happy with us if we choose right because He has not given us free will to sin.

2nd Reading: 1Corinthians 2:6-10; it is clear that those who heed the word of God, show maturity in faith.

- The Word of God bears fruit in the life of those who listen and act on it.
- “Rather, we speak God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
- The wisdom of God has over taken those who would not listen. God reveals His Word to the wise, those who are ready to be attentive to Him and meditate on His word.

- The same Word of God became flesh to dwell among us.

Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37; Jesus challenges the traditional understanding of the commandments of God. It is not only enough not to do, we are not to think of it and to also teach others to avoid sin.

- Human greatness before God is in obeying and also teaching others to obey God's commandment.
- "Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
- People learn more by observation. That is why, we teach others by how they see living and practicing what we believe.
- No wonder that the Church celebrates the Saints because of their heroic life and the example they give. They obeyed God and they teach others to do so as well.
- What Jesus demands of us is that we should not work according to the standard of the world, which sometimes is doing the barest minimum. We are to commit ourselves to practice the commandments so that we can receive the grace. No cutting corners.
- Our thoughts can eventually lead us to act. We are not to give in to bad thoughts. We are to dismiss evil inclinations in our mind as soon as they rear their heads.
- This makes it necessary for us to engage in thoughts and behaviors that will not lead us to sin. We should not give in to lust, anger, hate or lies. These can do serious damage as much as committing murder, adultery and untruthfulness.
- Also, the Lord wants us through our lives to read more meaning into what the commandments say. We are not minimalists.