

6A SML 2017
MT 5:17-37

For the last two Sundays and today, the gospels continue to plow through the Sermon on the Mount:

- ✓ Two weeks ago, the Beatitudes, often taken to be a preamble to the real meat of the Sermon on the Mount
- ✓ Last week, to be the salt of the earth and light for the world,
- ✓ This week, to delve below the surface of the Law, praying about the real meaning of the Ten Commandments:
 - You have heard it said, You shall not kill, but what I say to you is this . . .
 - You have heard it said, You shall not commit adultery, but what I say to you is this . . .

So before we take a deeper look at God's laws, let's better understand law in general.

Human law is based:

- ✓ upon right reason,
- ✓ imposed by legitimate authority,
- ✓ and the service of the common good.

Simple enough, but questions arise:

- ✓ What constitutes "right" reason?
- ✓ Can there be "wrong" reason?

- ✓ How does one know?
- ✓ Who decides what is right and what is wrong?
- ✓ The "legitimate authority?"
- ✓ The consensus of the people?
- ✓ How "common" does the common good have to be?

For the sake of argument, let's just say that the above definition of human law, for lack of a better one, is satisfactory, and leave the rest to philosophers and scholars to nuance and debate.

That being said, let's ask, is there a law that surpasses human law, say, divine law, the law of God, that is likewise:

- ✓ reasonable,
- ✓ imposed by the Highest Authority,
- ✓ and serving the common good?

One question that comes to mind is "How can we know God's law and how is God's law revealed?" The answer is, "In God's Word, namely scripture, and in God's actions."

We believe that Jesus Christ is God made man and we have believed this for two thousand years, even longer if you consider the ancient prophecies.

So when Jesus Christ spoke, His words, as His person, were and remain fully God and fully man speaking.

When Jesus Christ acted, His actions, as His person, were and remain fully God and fully man acting.

When Jesus Christ commanded, His commands, as His person, were and remain fully God and fully man commanding.

This morning's (evening's) gospel delves below the surface on two commandments that uphold fidelity in marriage and the permanence of marriage. In similar passages, Our Blessed Lord pointed out that Moses' flawed response to the permanence of marriage was due to "hardness of hearts," so He then cited the "Divine Law:"

From the beginning, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. GEN 2:24

From the beginning, God Himself is the author of marriage. Marriage as a union of one man and one woman existed long before any nation, religion or law was established.

In addition to divine law and human law is ontology. Ontology is the study of being and the study of beings insofar as they exist. Ontology is the study, at the most fundamental level, of "what is." The common phrase "It is what it is," is

ontological. And as the late St. John Paul said, ontology is what was meant to be “in the beginning.” What is ontological is based in divine law, God’s law. For example, Our Blessed Lord’s response to the Pharisees was an ontological response when he said:

“From the beginning,” God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. GEN 2:24

Here’s another example. No one would argue that motherhood is “ontologically” female. In order to be one’s mother, you must be a woman. And being one’s mother has nothing to do with biology, as a woman can adopt a child and be its mother. A man cannot adopt a child and be the child’s mother, because, again, motherhood is “ontologically” female. To say it another way, in God’s wisdom and according to God’s Law, only women can be mothers.

Along the same lines, fatherhood is “ontologically” male. In order to be one’s father, you must be a man. And being one’s father has nothing to do with biology, as a man can adopt a child and be its father. A woman cannot adopt a child and be the child’s father, because, again, fatherhood is “ontologically”

male. To say it another way, in God's wisdom and according to God's Law, only men can be fathers.

Let me take a moment to applaud single parents who fill both the role of mother and father. Any single parent will tell you it is not easy. But a single mom or dad who fulfills both roles does not make a mom a "father" or a dad a "mother." There is a difference between roles or function, and essence, or "what is."

During the time of Our Blessed Lord, the permanence and fidelity of marriage were challenged. Today what is being challenged is not only the permanence of marriage, but also its definition as a sacred union between a man and a woman. Following the example of Our Blessed Lord, the answer to the challenge is found in the "divine law." Our Blessed Lord found the answer in God's plan for marriage:

God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. GEN 2:24

God's law leaves no room to redefine marriage as the union of anyone other than one man and one woman.

People can love whoever they want, but they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us. Because redefining

marriage, or anything else for that matter, which is defined by God's law, is a slippery slope, as what is considered God's law today can be undermined tomorrow:

- ✓ from redefining marriage to include same sex unions now,
- ✓ to redefining marriage to include unions between an adult and someone underage (considering those who think like Warren Jeffs or the teacher who wanted to marry her student after she conceived a child with him)
- ✓ to redefining marriage to include unions among more than two adults, for example one or more men marrying one or more women
- ✓ to redefining motherhood to include men,
- ✓ to redefining fatherhood to include women,
- ✓ the list goes on.

“Given the terms of the debate, if Catholics lose the battle to ‘define’ marriage, the consequences could be grave. Through government tax dollars, children would be indoctrinated with the idea that everyone who believes marriage is the union of a husband and wife is a bigot.

Those who think that God's law should not be rewritten are being labeled and considered bigots, which impinges on our religious liberty and freedom - one reason why we pray the Prayer for Religious Liberty at the end of the prayer of the

faithful. Another reason is a health care policy that would have forced us to pay for abortions.

Stated simply, the Catholic Church would lose its religious liberty, if not its religious freedom.

If you take your Catholic faith seriously, then there are five issues involving non-negotiable moral values. They are:

Abortion

Euthanasia

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Human Cloning and

the Redefinition of Marriage

To protect our religious freedom to follow God's law without being labeled a bigot is the reason why we pray the Prayer for Religious Liberty at the end of the prayer of the faithful.