



## February 13, 2011 The Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

*If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live.—  
Sirach15:15*

Dear Friends;

Today's Scripture readings remind us that we are called to live out our faith in relationship with one another. Today Jesus explains to us what it means to be "salt and light" as he called us last week.

The culture of Jesus operated on the basis of honor and shame. A challenge to one's honor required retaliation in order to restore one's honor. The law given by Moses to the people was a means to regulate the behavior among the Israelites. The law helps to minimize the possible destruction of Israel by violent internal feuding.

In Matthew's gospel Jesus interprets the law by taking it further. He does not merely aim at actions that could lead to blood-feuds but he aims at changing the attitudes that lead to acts that call out for honor retribution. For Jesus and his community squelching the feud before it arises is more important than even worship in the temple! (Leave your gift at the altar and go be reconciled with your brother. Mt. 5:24)

Jesus accepts the reality of the culture in which he lives. However, he does reinterpret and reshape it to be more humane. For Jesus the law is made for people not people for the law. The point of the law and Jesus' interpretation is to preserve the harmonious life of the community.

We do not live in an honor and shame culture as did Jesus. We live in a culture where our relations are governed largely by economics. And there can be much cruelty in this system, especially for those without means. It would seem that we need to reinterpret our system so that it can be more humane and see that it preserves community life and the common good.

Part of the common good involves our relationship to the Church. We are called to be a community of love, care and service. We are members of the Universal Church that is made present in our local church—the Diocese of Oakland. The bishop is head of our local church and through him we have communion with the Universal Church through the Bishop of Rome.

Last week I announced the **Bishop's Annual Appeal**. The Appeal funds a variety of programs and needs in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Every parish is participating in this effort to raise \$2.1 million. **Our parish goal is \$16,999**. The ministries of our diocese need our support. Together with our whole diocesan family we share in the mission of the Church. We share in reaching out to those in need. And we are called to share our faith. This year's theme is "Many Generations, stewards of one faith."

Today we are giving out a brochure that outlines how we will all benefit from a successful collective effort. **Next week is Commitment Weekend**, at Mass we will take a few moments to ask for your gift and collect your completed pledge envelope. After prayer, discussion with your family and your financial considerations make a pledge by using your pledge card you received in the mail or the pledge envelopes available in church.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*