

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - FEBRUARY 15, 2026

(based on the long version of the gospel)

Since the end of the Christmas season, our gospel readings have been taken from the Sermon on the Mount. It is considered the greatest sermon ever preached and the heart of Christian life.

To understand what Jesus is doing in this great sermon, we have to go back to the Old Testament.

When God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He led them to Mount Sinai. There He revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses. Those commandments have structured the life and faith of Jews and Christians to this day. Because God chose Moses to reveal His Law, Moses was also seen as the one with the authority to interpret how the Ten Commandments should be put into practice. Moses did not have the power to change the Law. He only had the authority to interpret it.

Then Jesus comes along. He goes up on the mountain to deliver His great sermon, just as Moses went up a mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. By doing so, He makes it clear that He is the new Moses, giving the people a new law and new covenant.

There is one striking difference. The Law in the Old Testament did not come from Moses but from God. Jesus, on the other hand, makes it clear that this new law comes from HIM. That is why He says, "You have heard it said....but I say...." He is not only the prophet who delivers the commandment. He is the God who gives it.

That is what makes the Sermon on the Mount so forceful and compelling. It is the word of God spoken to us by the Son of God. It carries with it the authority of God Himself.

That means that everything Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount is meant to be taken seriously. We cannot pick and choose which of the commandments we will follow. We can't decide that we like the part about murder but don't like the part about adultery. We can't commit to following Jesus' teaching on stealing but then say we can't promise to never lie. Every part of it is the word of God. So we are responsible for putting it all into practice. That is why Jesus says, "...not the smallest letter or smallest part of a letter will pass from the law."

But Jesus desires to go deeper still. What He desires is not only that we put the commandments into practice, but that we allow those commandments to change our hearts. What Jesus is interested in is transforming us from the inside out. He does not give us the commandments to control us. He gives them to teach us how we are to live, and most importantly, how we are to love.

Love is the greatest commandment. It is what makes sense of every law. Without love, we might manage to not break the commandments. But we will never become the people Jesus wants us to become. We might manage not to kill anyone, but we will still harbor hatred in our hearts. We

might manage to not commit adultery, but we will still allow ourselves to treat women and men as objects of lust. We might manage to not lie under oath, but we will still use our words to deceive and manipulate.

The person who loves, however, goes above and beyond what the word of the law commands. Someone who loves will refuse to steal. But she will also give food to the hungry. A loving person will avoid killing another human being at all costs. But he will also find ways to make the lives of others better. Someone who loves will try not to lie. But she will also help others to see the truth.

As we stand here today, we are only days away from Ash Wednesday. Lent is almost upon us. And Lent is not simply a season of giving things up or checking spiritual boxes. Lent is the Church's annual invitation to become more honest about who we are and who God is calling us to be.

In particular, we will be challenged by these sobering words as the ashes are placed on our foreheads: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Lent strips away the illusion that we have unlimited time. It reminds us that life is fragile, that our days are numbered, and that love cannot be postponed.

If God is going to make a real change in us during the forty days of Lent, we will have to look honestly at our hearts and ask some uncomfortable questions. Where have we settled for minimal effort instead of wholehearted love? Where have we followed the letter of the law while resisting its spirit? Where have we learned how to look good without allowing God to make us good?

During these next few days leading up to Ash Wednesday, it would be a good idea to go before God in prayer and ask Him what we need to cut out of our lives so that we can be the loving person He desires us to be. Then whatever we choose to give up will not only be an exercise in self-control and will-power, but an opportunity to allow ourselves to be radically changed.

Conversion is not about becoming someone else. It is about becoming the person God created us to be. It is about becoming a purer reflection of the loving and merciful God we worship. He didn't just go through the motions to save us. Rather He gave Himself totally and completely on the cross and through the Eucharist we are about to receive. Just so, we have to give ourselves totally and wholeheartedly to Him if we are to know the joy and peace He desires for us.