

**OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH**  
**HOMILY FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)**  
**13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2011**

Jesus said: “For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.”

So what was wrong with the virtue of the scribes and Pharisees? Anyone living at that time would see them as virtuous people. The scribes and Pharisees were scrupulously careful to do the right thing at all times. They kept all the rules in the Law of Moses. They were just like good Catholics, who obey the teaching of the Church faithfully in every detail. What could be wrong with that?

Jesus explains his point with examples from the Ten Commandments.

He takes the fifth commandment: “You must not kill.”

Few would argue with that, but simply keeping the rule not to kill was not good enough for Jesus. We could continue to hate the people we really want to kill. This would be bad both spiritually and psychologically.

We must not repress our negative feelings; we must let God transform them into something positive. So, what Jesus demands of us is this: “You must not be angry with your brother”, which means with anyone.

“Jesus is moving us away from rules to motives, from feelings to good attitudes.

People kill because they are angry. This kind of anger is a sin just as killing is a sin. Answer: Deal with the anger. Then both sins can be avoided and more positive attitudes developed.

The only virtue in not killing would be the virtue of self-discipline. The scribes and Pharisees were very good at self-discipline but this did not make them loving people.

There are many other virtues.

For Jesus the greatest virtue is love. He said that the whole Law can be fulfilled by loving God and our neighbour, meaning all the people with whom we live and work. For Jesus love meant unconditional and selfless love, the desire to do what is best for everyone. This is the kind of love that God has for us, the kind of love that is to be found in the kingdom of heaven.

This is perfect love; it includes all the virtues. We have to love perfectly if we are to fit for the kingdom of heaven.

This takes time to develop.

We will need laws and rules while we are learning to love perfectly they are only provisional and temporary. Christians needing laws and rules are like learner drivers.

They are our L plates. When learners pass their test they throw away their L plates with joy. They are free.

When we can love as God loves, perfectly, we can throw away the rules, but not before.

The Church will tell us when we have passed the test.

**Rev Geoff Carey**