

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week in my bulletin article, I wrote about how we are called to be in relationship with Jesus – this is the very reason we were made. Remember back to the Baltimore Catechism’s definition of the meaning of life:

Q. Why did God make me?

A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life so that we can be happy with Him forever in the next.

Sometimes we forget that the Church has *always* called us into relationship with God – a living and personal relationship with a living and personal God. God made me to know Him and love Him: this is the language of relationship. Do we really know God? It’s easy to study the things of God, but do we *really* know Him? This is the most important thing we will do in this life – more important than our education, more important than our work, for these things will pass away, but our relationship with God will last forever.

What are the implications of this relationship? I mentioned last week that doctrines and theology, morality, and liturgy flow from our relationship (not the other way around). Today’s Gospel speaks about some of the moral implications of being in relationship with Jesus. I want to preface this by saying that Christian Morality is not (and never has been) about a series of rules. Christian Morality is about living in the best way possible. We believe that following the “Christian Moral Code” (for lack of a better word) means that we will become truly human – a human truly alive – and that breaking the code will wound us and make us less human. This is because it is all about relationship with God – directly, through worship and obedience to Him, or indirectly, through how we love others, ourselves, and all of creation.

Jesus says that He has not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them, so He takes the Commandments and speaks of their fulfillment (just to name a couple):

- *You shall not kill* is fulfilled in *You shall not even be angry with each other or insult others* (to paraphrase)
- *You shall not commit adultery* is fulfilled in *Even looking at someone with lust is committing adultery*

Being in relationship with Jesus means that how we treat others changes – we see them as children of God, and are called to treat them with the dignity and respect that comes with belonging to God. We are called not just *not to kill*, but to **love our enemies**, and hold back our anger from the people around us. Insulting or degrading others, belittling them, ruining their reputations through gossip or detraction (detraction means telling unkind truths) can kill people in their hearts and souls. As disciples of Christ, we are called to live our humanity fully by controlling our anger and reaching out in love to others.

In our relationship with people, we are called not to get in between the bond of marriage through adultery, but Jesus says there is more – we are not to use people *even in our minds*. In the pornographed culture in which we live, which looks at people as objects to be used for my own selfish sexual pleasure, Jesus commands us to look at people as people with respect and dignity. As St. John Paul II said, the problem with pornography is NOT that it shows too much of the person, but that **it shows too little!** Pornography draws us to look at the skin, the shape of a person’s body, and not at the soul, the core of who a person really is. Pornography is the opposite of the Incarnation (remember that the Incarnation is when Jesus took on our flesh, He became human) – pornography takes the person out of the flesh. This is what lust does – it dehumanizes the person who is lusted after, and degrades the person who lusts. Being in relationship with Jesus means that we recognize and venerate the gift of the person – who is a child of God, made in His image and likeness.

May we continue to grow in our relationship with Almighty God each day. May our actions flow from this relationship, calling us to truly become the best humans, the best people we can be.