

February 15, 2026—Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Marcian was a wealthy, overzealous young man who came to Rome during the Pontificate of Pope Pius I during the 140s. He made a generous gift to the Roman Church and wanted the pope to confirm some doctrines that he held. He believed that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of Jesus and that the whole Old Testament should be considered void and useless. Pope Pius couldn't agree with this, and Marcion left in anger and started his own church. He was the first to do so in history, but certainly not the last. He began the heresy of Marcionism.

In the Gospel this Sunday from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us plainly: **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”** (See CCC #121-123).

There are many important truths that the Old Testament teaches us. For example, the first chapter of Genesis says, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** and another, **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”** and also, **“God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”**. These verses set forth vital principles to help us understand the world and ourselves.

We are exposed to the Old Testament in so many ways in the Sacred Liturgy. The First Reading on Sunday is almost always from the Old Testament. It is chosen because it has the same theme as the Gospel for the day.

The Responsorial Psalm in the Mass is almost always from the Book of Psalms. Today we heard a part of psalm 119. It is the longest of the 150 psalms and is all about the Law given to Moses. It praises the Law and how good the precepts of the Law are and how we should be obedient to the Law of God. We repeated: **“Blessed are they who follow the Law of the Lord.”** The liturgical laws of the Old Testament no longer apply, because they have been fulfilled in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as the Church hands it on to us.

However, the heart of the Law, which is the 10 Commandments, applies always and to everyone because it is part of the Natural Moral Law. The Natural Moral Law is written on every human heart. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus uses the 10 Commandments as the basis for His moral teaching. The First Reading from the Book of Sirach said: **“If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live.”** It doesn't mean save in the sense that we understand it but is a case when Jesus fulfills the Law. For us, the

grace of faith lived in love comes from Jesus Christ to save us, but the 10 Commandments remain a sure guide on how to live our lives in Christ.

Jesus took three of the Commandments and pointed out their deeper meaning in the Gospel. The 10 Commandments can be broken in a serious or mortal way, but also with a lesser gravity as a venial sin. It is one thing to kill someone by taking the life of an innocent person, murder is clearly serious matter, but this commandment can also be broken through unjust anger, Jesus said. Unjust anger could be mortal sin, or it could be venial sin depending upon the circumstances. Remember, a mortal sin requires 3 things: serious matter, along with the knowledge that it is wrong and the intention to do it anyway. Anger can be a spontaneous response to something that startles or irritates us and is probably a venial sin, but it can become serious as an attitude that dominates one's life and cuts to the heart of someone.

Sex is created by God for marriage, and it falls under the commandment, "**You shall not commit adultery**". Lust is the forerunner of adultery and Jesus called it adultery in the heart. Lust begins in the will; it is a choice to visualize and dwell upon an immoral image. It is important to note that every human being has what I call "crazy thoughts" that just pop into the mind without any deliberate action on our part—they can be sexual or violent. In any case, we simply must let those thoughts or images pass out of our minds and not give them any other consideration. There is no sin then and we should be careful not to make them more than they are. Now if a person is viewing pornographic matter, that is another matter.

Jesus speaks about cutting your hand off or gouging your eye out if they are the instrument of sin. "**It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.**" Of course, Jesus doesn't want us to maim ourselves, but He uses hyperbole or obvious exaggeration to point out the seriousness of sin. He wants us to repent and not end up in Gehenna, the word He uses for hell. In the Sermon on the Mount, He simply stated that a valid marriage is binding upon the husband and wife.

The third commandment that Jesus reflects upon is, "**You shall not bear false witness**", particularly in taking oaths. A Christian must give his word and be sincere in his speech: "**Let your 'yes' mean yes and your 'no' mean no.**" He wants us to be honest, straightforward and forthright as well as charitable.

The beginning of Lent is this coming Wednesday and Jesus invites us to once again examine our lives and see where we need conversion. The spiritual life is

not only about repenting of our sins, but also growing in virtue. Our salvation begins with Jesus and the rest of life is about sanctification—choosing Jesus again and again each day.