

## Reflection for the Liturgy of the Word

June 10, 2020

Matthew 5:17-19

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Beginning with Monday's Gospel, the readings of this week slowly walk us through Chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel. As Diane shared with us on Monday, it would seem that the first 12 verses, the Beatitudes, would have been more than enough direction for how this early Christian Community should live.

Nonetheless, the writer continues with a series of quotes that pick up specific themes that he doesn't want to be lost.

The particular verses that we hear this morning, centering on the fulfillment of the law and the prophets are particularly challenging to hear today as we experience the impact of unjust laws – written and unwritten – on our black sisters and brothers.

The community that the Gospel was written for was struggling to bridge their understanding of the law that they had lived as Jews and this new way of living under the law that was offered them as followers of Jesus. The law of the Torah and the myriad laws that had defined how they were to live had held them in good stead – had defined them as a people – and been a source of life. It reminds me of the words we were told in our formation ... "You keep the rule and the rule will keep you."

But Jesus says, "I came to *fulfill* the law" ... not to *obey* the law ... nor to disregard the law... but to FULFILL it.

As a Jewish person, we are quite certain that he followed the prescripts of his faith with diligence – attending the synagogue and observing the great feasts.

But we also know that

He cured on the sabbath;  
ate with sinners;  
refused to stone a woman who was accused of adultery; and  
spoke with Samaritans as friends.

What Law then did he come to fulfill?

This question found me going with Moses to Mt. Sinai to receive the stone tablets carved with the Ten Commandments. In my catechism days back at Sacred Heart in Dearborn, we had to memorize them. They were the list we were to use when we went to confession. What did not cross my mind and heart **then** was that God who is Love, desiring to be in relationship with the people, was the One who gave them the laws ... laws that described ways of being in relationship – with God – and with one another.

It was *that law* of love that Jesus came to fulfill.

At another time Jesus was asked by a lawyer, "... What must I do to inherit everlasting life?" And when asked what is written in the law, the man replied:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

A law of love –  
and now – in our time – we are the ones being called to fulfill THAT law.

That is not new news ... it is not a new law.

Christ has no body now but ours.

On Monday, I was privileged to stand with and walk with a crowd of women and men – black and white, young and old, beginning at our usual gathering place for such actions at Custer's statue.

Black Lives Matter.  
No justice / No peace.  
Say my name.  
I can't breathe.

These words were heard here in our city of Monroe even as they were across our country and around the world. I am certain that they have found a place within – and I would suggest an uncomfortable place within – each of our hearts.

Christ has no body now but ours

Many of us who are gathered this morning – at a safe distance – may not be able to make the choice to be physically present at such gatherings. Nonetheless, are we not called to listen deeply to what we are seeing and hearing and to ask ourselves the challenging and uncomfortable questions that are being raised about systemic racism?

It is a time when we are called, not just gently invited, to not remain at a safe distance in our hearts, our prayers, our conversations.

Christ has no body now but ours

Perhaps it is for this moment that we have been blessed as the IHM congregation to have been co-founded by a woman of color – Theresa Maxis Duchemen.

Perhaps we will be blessed to live in a time when the Law that is Love will move toward a time of fulfillment where justice and peace will be the lived experience of all.

I would like to close with a quote from Martin Luther King Jr:

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one,  
my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete  
the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience.  
And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice.