
18 Monday

MONDAY, 11th Week in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 21: 1 - 16
Ps 5: 2-3, 5-7
Matthew 5: 38 - 42

“You have heard it said.....” These few days, the gospel readings give us Jesus’ advice and instructions about practical behaviour in living God’s way. Many of His sayings in this part of St Matthew’s gospel have become classic moral phrases in the English language. Perhaps so familiar that we don’t sufficiently appreciate how radical and demanding His words are.

“You have heard it said...” Jesus quoted the advice and wisdom of the scriptures. But they were (and still are) popular “common sense” attitudes too. What about the generally accepted practices and attitudes of our modern societies ? What do we hear people say, about what’s right or wrong behaviour ? Do we simply accept what “people” think or say, and act accordingly ? As Christians, whose standards do we live by ?

“But I say to you...” Let’s take a deeper look at what Jesus proposes: non-resistance to evil done to us, turning the other cheek, handing over more than what someone wants to extort from us, going ‘the extra mile’ with someone who forces us, giving to anyone who asks, not refusing to lend to someone who wants to borrow. That’s a tough list ! Crazy, impractical, unreal : so we might hear ‘ordinary people’ say. But have I ever seriously, deliberately, acted on Jesus’ advice when I found myself in some kind of similar life situation ?

“But I say to you...” Jesus is only asking us really to love each other, to imitate His own most generous respect, concern, care and love towards everybody. It isn’t easy, nor is it possible without God’s grace: do I really trust in Him that much ?