Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"I have not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17).

*2 Cor 3:4-11*; *Mt 5:17-19*

In his letters to the community at Corinth, St. Paul describes the transition from the Mosaic Law of obedience to the dispensation of grace, which enables us to be good because it is our nature perfected in Christ. If Moses' face was so brilliant that the people could not look directly at him, how much brighter is the face of Christ, who frees us from fear to live in the freedom of the children of God? The first law was written on tablets of stone; the law Jesus offers is written on our hearts.

Paul's preaching sought to create a bridge from the first covenant of commands to an even deeper covenant of grace. Continuity between the two covenants was essential if Paul's Jewish brothers and sisters were to hear his invitation to make the transition to Christ.

Matthew's Gospel seeks the same continuity: Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. The commandments given by Moses were meant to hold the people in right relationship - with God and with one another. But obeying them by not killing, not stealing, not lying, not coveting, or other commands, was just the beginning. To enter fully into an intimate relationship with God and within the community was to be filled with the Holy Spirit of love, God's own inner life.

The journey from the first covenant to fulfillment is the work of grace as it meets our freedom. Discipleship is a day-to-day choice we must make to go with the flow of grace and the guidance of the Spirit. Those who surrender to this movement experience a kind of leap in quality in the ordinary tasks and interactions of life. Patience begets patience, generosity inspires imitation, and cheerfulness lifts everyone up.

Pope Francis has described evangelization not as winning an argument about creeds or theology, but as a process of attracting people with the witness of love. Faith in Christ becomes irresistible. Encouragement works better than correction or criticism. Openness engenders trust and cooperation. The pope’s appeal for a church that does not judge and opens its doors to everyone without qualification, especially the lost and wounded, is his notion of effective evangelization.

This is the image of the Spirit at work in us, and the results are affirmed in our experience over time. This is the joy of the Gospel.