

Personal Knowledge of the Lawgiver Third Week in Lent Wednesday, March 2, 2016
8:15 AM Dt 4:1, 5-9; **Mt 5:17-19** (Only through Jesus' divinely blessed life could the Law be fulfilled.)

“I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”

Jesus had, as you see in the New Testament, a love-hate relationship to this Torah of Israel, this Law enshrined in what we call the Old Testament, what the Jews call the Tanakh.

Now much of **the Law** is worthy of our consideration; it is full of wisdom and truly admirable. It expresses justice. It expresses kindness, neighborliness, charity, goodness, fairness, all those qualities we identify with good people. But it had a bad side effect, just like drugs. You hear the advertisement for drugs. Well, this may cause brain tumors; but if it doesn't, well, then it may help you. Well, so with the Law. **It urged people to a very righteous life, but then it left no room for error; it left no room for compassion; it left no room for failure.**

So **Jesus** said, well, I haven't really come to abolish the Law; I've come to fulfill it because **only through his divinely blessed life could the Law be fulfilled. It was calling forth a kind of life that ordinarily people just can't live.** This was the point St. Paul made so often. And St. Paul points out that he made greater progress in living out the tradition of the elders than anybody else he knew, and even he failed. So it is a stretch. So it has to be tempered.

But here Jesus is not talking about tempering so much; he is talking about **he is the one now who is expressing the meaning of all this.** And how could he do that? **He can do that because he knows the Lawgiver.** It is true that some of his remarks in today's reading are, one could say, contradicted by other statements he makes: such as, “Not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the Law until all things have taken place, therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be

called least.” Well, he himself did that on quite a number of occasions, but always for a higher purpose.

And the point is, what the evangelist is trying to show us is that **he knew what the higher purpose was**. He wasn't breaking laws for the purpose of breaking laws, or to be independent but, rather, **to be more obedient to the actual intention of the Lawgiver. And this he passed on to his disciples through the Holy Spirit**. “The Holy Spirit,” he says, “will teach you whatever you are to say, whatever you are to do.” So in him we have fulfillment of the Law. And in him we have knowledge of the meaning of the Law and personal knowledge of the Lawgiver.