

Scrupulous Distinctions Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time Monday, August 27, 2018 1 Thes 1:1-5, 11-12; **Mt 23:13-22** St. Monica (Conscience ultimately has to be an openness to the Holy Spirit, who is really our teacher and guide, and on whom we must depend upon.)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”

Now this is a public statement. He is actually not addressing directly scribes and Pharisees. He is talking to the crowds, but he is using this direct address. Now why is that? Because **the crowds and his own disciples have some of the same qualities. They can easily fall into these blind pathways.**

Now we read only part of this section today; we will read the next section tomorrow. It’s all about **distorted ideas about law and morality.** This one focuses on oath taking, and when are oaths really binding and when aren’t they. And they are based on completely fatuous distinctions that are morally irrelevant. But what’s behind that is actually the workings of the scrupulous conscience. **The scrupulous conscience tries to make distinctions that are irrelevant to protect itself, to justify itself, to free itself.** Jesus is saying this doesn’t work at all. **Scrupulosity** is not a valid approach to conscience. **It is a fallacious approach to conscience.** Some people may be burdened with it, then they have to find a way of relieving themselves of the burden. **Conscience has to be a matter of actually seeing truth.** It is not just a matter of feeling. It is not just a matter of simply reasoning. But feeling and reasoning are part of conscience. **Conscience ultimately has to be an openness to the Holy Spirit, who is really our teacher and guide, and on whom we must depend upon.**

Now the study of the Law in Judaism was really a very holy thing, a holy ministry. And it did yield men and women of great love. It is not, however, something that Christians should follow because Jesus, in a way, surpasses that approach to God, although it was good. St. Paul makes mention of the fact, yes, of course **the Torah is good, but Christ is more.** And Christ will show us the way, and indeed is the way. But if you notice, **Christ is the way of wholehearted, total, intentional gift of self.** There can be no reservations if we follow Christ. We cannot make distinctions that are specious. We cannot save ourselves or protect ourselves or free ourselves from the responsibility of being a child of God and living like it.