

**Fulfillment of the Law**      Third Week of Lent      Wednesday, March 27, 2019      Dt 4:1, 5-9;    **Mt 5:17-19**    (God uses everything for something ongoing that builds up and finally develops and flourishes in communion.)

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

Now these words are very particular, I could even say peculiar, to the Gospel of Matthew. No other evangelist goes to such lengths to show Jesus as fulfilling the Torah. And you could get the idea, reading St. Paul for example, that the Law has come to its end because it has served its purpose, and now we can go on with something else, namely faith in Jesus Christ and the life of grace and the Holy Spirit. And you could get that same impression from Luke, and John. But **Matthew makes a point that everything Jesus is doing is the fulfillment of what has gone before.**

Now did Jesus actually say these words? I don't know; they are not recorded in any other gospel. But did Jesus imply this? Yes, I think he did; I think **he implied that his life was a fulfillment of something, that he had come to bring a certain sort of completion.** But the completion he brought was **the beginning of something else**, as every end is a new beginning. The whole idea of death is the introduction to a new life. This is basic to everything Jesus did and said. It's something we need to consider because **of this whole idea of the spirit of the Law**, which is not a term used here, but St. Paul brings it up, others do as well, the meaning, another word, **the meaning of the Law. Jesus was often disputing that very idea because there is a way in which people can become very small minded and black and white and they want the law of God to tell them precisely what to do at this moment.** But what it is that they want to rely on is a generality, good in itself, **but generalities are generalities.**

Now in our tradition we call being able to interpret generalities as the virtue of prudence. **But the virtue prudence is not that common, and people can hem themselves in a certain sort of**

**scrupulosity trying to determine what God wants at every moment by deducing something from generalities.** This is really hopeless, and yet it is the way of many people; and it's something Jesus was encountering all the time in his life. So **he said something new and different**, and people said, "Oh, that's not what the Law says." Well no, it's new and different, **but it's in the spirit of the Law, it's in the spirit of the fulfillment of what the Law was all about.**

So we have to think about what all this means: **how God uses everything for something ongoing that builds up and finally develops and flourishes in communion.** This word "communion" is a very good word; it includes everything: **our union with God, the gradual unification of human awareness into a new sense of who we are, why we are here, what God is calling us to do and be, all that.** And that will bring, allow to come about, **the healing of the earth from its many ills and injustices and scars inflicted upon it by the inordinate activities of humanity.** So this is all very important, the fulfillment of the Law, an aspect of Jesus' mission that Matthew himself focused upon, and which we might also reflect upon in this third week of Lent.