

17 June 2026 - Wednesday of the 11th even-numbered week

[2Ki 2:1,6-14; Matt 6:1-6. 16-18](#)

Homily

In what we call the Sermon on the Mount, that is, the long discourse with which Jesus begins his preaching in Matthew's Gospel, he first establishes, in the series of beatitudes, the fundamental charter of the new world - that is, the Kingdom of Heaven - that he wants to establish. Then Jesus explains that he has not come to abrogate the Law but to bring it to its fullness, and he concludes: *"unless your righteousness or justice exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven"*.

What does the word 'justice' or 'righteous' mean in this context? In the language and legal view of the time, to be righteous was to be in accordance with the precepts of the Law, in three areas in particular: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. So Jesus tells his listeners that if their almsgiving, prayer and fasting do not exceed the attitude of the Pharisees, they will not enter the Kingdom. Could it be that Jesus is inviting them to give more alms, pray more and fast more rigorously?

No, that's not what Jesus is calling them - and us - to do. He explains himself immediately afterwards, in the text we have just read. "Beware of practising your righteousness before men, that you may be noticed by them", And then he gives his recommendations concerning what were considered the three pillars of righteousness, according to the Pharisees: almsgiving, prayer and fasting.

In all three areas, Jesus' teaching is a call to truth and righteousness of intention. Our true being, our true 'self' in each of us, is found at the innermost centre of ourselves, where we receive our being from God, where we are continually begotten by God's breath of life. Around this core there are various layers of protective envelopes - all our "egos" - and we have added several to better protect ourselves. So much so that we are in danger of always living on the surface of our being. We try to give others the best possible image of ourselves, and we easily indulge in this image, often being more deluded than those around us.

On the subject of almsgiving, Jesus warns against the temptation to give alms, either to be noticed by others, or even to give ourselves a clear conscience. The less public the thing is, the less aware one is of one's own generosity, the better, because the only thing that really counts is the deep motivation, which by its

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

very nature is secret to everyone, including ourselves, and which only the Father sees in secret.

The same goes for prayer. If we pray to be noticed - either by others, or by ourselves, or even by God, we have already received our reward. Our prayer goes no further. True prayer is in the secret of the heart: it is not the kind of prayer that one can pretend to teach, nor the kind of prayer that gives warm and beautiful feelings, nor the kind that can be weighed. It is the prayer that is naked, interior, beyond the gestures or words that can express it and that no one but God can hear, not even ourselves. This is probably what St Anthony of Egypt meant when he said that prayer is not yet pure as long as one is aware of praying.

The evangelist Matthew introduces the text of the Pater here, and in a passage that comes immediately afterwards, which is the third element of the triptych, Jesus gives the same teaching about fasting.

During this Eucharist, let us ask for the grace for each of us to shed a few more layers of our ego, to enable us to live, in ever greater truth, all the aspects of our life, and thus to penetrate ever more deeply into the interior life, which consists of being in contact as constantly as possible with that point, at the heart of our being, where the exchange of the Word is held, in secret, which unceasingly engenders us to Life.

*** We celebrate today the memorial of Blessed M.-Joseph Cassant, monk of our Order

Armand Veilleux