

17 July 2026 - Friday of the 15th week even

[Is 38, 1-6. 21-22. 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8](#)

Homily

In yesterday's Gospel, Jesus drew a comparison between his commandments, which are an easy yoke to bear and a light burden, on the one hand, and, on the other, the weight under which the Scribes and Doctors of the Law crushed the people. And he invited all those who were struggling under the burden to come to him. Today's Gospel continues this polemic with a concrete example.

According to the casuistry of the Doctors of the Law, plucking a few ears of grain and crumpling them in your hands was equivalent to harvesting. It was therefore a forbidden activity on the Sabbath. So when Jesus and his disciples walked through the fields on the Sabbath and the disciples began to pluck and eat a few ears of grain, the Pharisees cried scandal. "This is not allowed, they say!"

Jesus' response is twofold. Firstly, he reveals the meaning of every law and, secondly, he affirms his messianic identity. The first part of the reasoning, concerning the Old Testament Temple, is not easy to follow, but the meaning is clear. The service of the Temple was more important than the laws of the Sabbath, which the priests could break in order to carry out this service. The disciples of Jesus are in the service of the Son of Man, who is greater than the Temple. Moreover, if it was legitimate for David to break the laws of the Temple to feed his hungry companions, it is even more legitimate for Jesus to allow his disciples to satisfy their hunger on the Sabbath, because the Son of Man is master of the Sabbath. The Pharisees had understood the message and, more than ever, they wanted to kill Jesus, whom they considered a blasphemer, since he presented himself as the Messiah.

However, the Pharisees did not perceive the fine point of Jesus' answer, which was: "If you had understood what it means: I want mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned these men who are not at fault". Love of neighbor is the supreme law that transcends all others and to which all others must be subordinated in their application.

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