

Dear Padre,

My grandkids' parents don't want them to be baptized. Can I do it myself secretly so as not to cause problems?

Your concern is understandable, but secret baptisms are prohibited in the Catholic Church. The decision to baptize a child is determined by his or her parents. To secretly usurp their decision may cause problems of its own. For an infant to be baptized, "The parents or at least one of them or the person who legitimately takes their place must consent," and "There must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion" (*Code of Canon Law*, 868 §1). An exception is permitted when the child's life is in immediate danger: "An infant of Catholic parents or even of non-Catholic parents is baptized licitly in danger of death, even against the will of the parents" (*CCL* 868 §2). Here, the Church's pastoral concern is for the child to receive the immediate graces from the sacrament; the question of raising the child in the faith becomes moot in a life-or-death situation.

"Since the earliest times, baptism has been administered to children, for it is a grace and a gift of God that does not presuppose any human merit.... Entry into Christian life gives access to true freedom" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1282). Continue to pray that your family may see baptism as a sign of God's love, which offers true freedom for humanity. ●



SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Byron J. Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Our Parish COMMUNITY

February 15, 2026
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Sirach 15:15-20 / 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 /
Matthew 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37



Some Walk Away

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No' (Matthew 5:37). This teaching of Jesus seems to get lost, perhaps because it comes at the end of a long listing of commandments. Regardless, it seems to get right to the point, almost making the other commandments unnecessary or perhaps clarifying them. Either you are going to be a child of your heavenly Father and live like one, or you are not. If you are a child of God, you would not contemplate any evil behaviors, let alone actually do them.

That is the clarity of the teaching of Jesus. It is authentic. It is compelling. It invites a response. Yet, there are those who were present with him who did not understand. Who missed the point. Who insisted on another way. Who could not discern the simplicity of the truth. To each of these men and women, including some with the religious title of scribe or Pharisee, he observed, "And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be" (Matthew 6:23). Even sadder is that not only did they miss the point, they also simply walked away. Do you want to say more than a simple "Yes" or "No"? Do you want to say, "Yes, but... I can't do it now." Or "I can't forgive this particular person." Or "I can't welcome this particular stranger." Or "I can't love him or her or them."

Have you also missed the point? Do you also want to walk away? ●

Reflect

What teachings of Jesus are too hard to consider?



"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,'
and your 'No' mean 'No.'"
MATTHEW 5:37



LEARN ABOUT
THE AUTHORS
OF OUR PARISH
COMMUNITY

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV



FABRIZIO MAFFEI / SHUTTERSTOCK

The Spirit opens borders, first of all, in our hearts. He is the Gift that opens our lives to love. His presence breaks down our hardness of heart, our narrowness of

mind, our selfishness, the fears that enchain us and the narcissism that makes us think only of ourselves.... Sadly, oddly enough, in a world of burgeoning "social" media, we risk being ever more alone.

HOMILY, ROME, JUNE 8, 2025

Monday

February 16
Weekday
Jas 1:1-11
Mk 8:11-13

Tuesday

February 17
Weekday
Jas 1:12-18
Mk 8:14-21

Wednesday

February 18
Ash Wednesday
Jl 2:12-18
2 Cor 5:20-6:2
Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday

February 19
Thursday after
Ash Wednesday
Dt 30:15-20
Lk 9:22-25

Friday

February 20
Friday after
Ash Wednesday
Is 58:1-9a
Mt 9:14-15

Saturday

February 21
Saturday after
Ash Wednesday
Is 58:9b-14
Lk 5:27-32

Sunday

February 22
First Sunday
of Lent
Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Rom 5:12-19 or
5:12, 17-19
Mt 4:1-11

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



The
Catholic Church
in Pocahontas County
West Virginia

OUR MISSION
Amen, I say to you,
whatever you did
for one of these
least brothers of mine,
you did for me.
(Matthew 25:40, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209
Telephone: St. John Neumann 304-799-6778, St. Bernard of Clairvaux 304-572-0847
Website: PocahontasCatholic.org
E-mail: Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org



Patty Bryant
Margaret Bryant
Ann Burke
Danielle Cade
Dick Connor
Cynthia Olson
Quinn Riffle
Tristan Sizemore

EUCHARIST THIS WEEK

Monday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Wednesday	12:00 p.m.	St. Bernard
	5:00 p.m.	St. Mark
	7:00 p.m.	St. John
Friday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Saturday	5:30 p.m.	St. Bernard
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	St. John
	11:30 a.m.	St. Mark



St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer every day during daylight.
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before each Eucharist or by appointment, and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.
The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is available any time upon request.



Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 800-276-1562.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you.
(Sirach 15:15, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- **Thank you** to everyone who helped take down our Christmas decorations this year. Save the date: December 20, when we will decorate for Christmas 2026!
- **This weekend** we retire the "Alleluia" until Easter.
- **Thank you** to all our *King Cake* bakers during Mardi Gras season.
- **Mardi Gras pot-luck dinner** at St. John Neumann Church is at 6 p.m. on Tuesday (February 17). Bring your friends and your favorite items to share, and maybe even dress in your appropriate pre-fast costumes!
- **Lent begins** with Ash Wednesday (February 18). Ash Wednesday is *not* a day of obligations, but it is a day of fast and abstinence.
- **Ash Wednesday collection** is for the retirement fund for priests of our diocese.
- **Stations of the Cross** is every Friday during Lent at 5 p.m. at St. John Neumann and St. Mark the Evangelist. Stations will include Exposition and Benediction at St. John Neumann this week.
- **Community Lenten Service** is every Wednesday at noon at Marlinton United Methodist Church, and brown bag lunch will follow for those who can remain. Each Wednesday, a different pastor from participating Churches in the Marlinton area offer a message, this week by Carmel LaRue of Marlinton United Methodist Church.
- Family Resource Network **drive-through food pantry** will be this Wednesday (February 18) from 9 a.m. to noon, and 1-3 p.m. at 503 Third Avenue in Marlinton. *Please remain in your vehicle and have your vehicle trunk or back empty and clean, to help us load quickly and safely.*

LAST WEEKEND

	<u>attendance</u>	<u>collection</u>
St. John Neumann	32	\$1,080.00
U.S.A. Missions collection		\$57.00
Fund for the Poor		\$10.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	8	\$247.00
U.S.A. Missions collection		\$15.00
Fund for the Poor		\$300.00
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	85	\$1,074.00
Fund for the Poor		\$419.00
total	125	\$3,202.00

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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

First Reading (Sirach 15:15-20)

If you choose you can keep the commandments,
they will save you;
if you trust in God, you too shall live;
he has set before you fire and water
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.
Before man are life and death, good and evil,
whichever he chooses shall be given him.
Immense is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power, and all-seeing.
The eyes of God are on those who fear him;
he understands man's every deed.
No one does he command to act unjustly,
to none does he give license to sin.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34, *Grail translation, 1963*)

Response: Blessed are they
who follow the law of the Lord!

They are happy whose life is blameless,
who follow God's law!
They are happy who do his will,
seeking him with all their hearts.

You have laid down your precepts
to be obeyed with care.
May my footsteps be firm
to obey your statutes.

Bless your servant and I shall live
and obey your word.
Open my eyes that I may see
the wonders of your law.

Teach me the demands of your statutes
and I will keep them to the end.
Train me to observe your law,
to keep it with my heart.

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)

Brothers and sisters:
We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,
not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.
Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.
For the Spirit scrutinizes everything,
even the depths of God.

Gospel Acclamation (*c.f.* Matthew 11:25)

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;
you have revealed to little ones
the mysteries of the kingdom.

Gospel (Matthew 5:17-37)

Jesus said to his disciples:
"Do not think that I have come to abolish
the law or the prophets.
I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.
Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,
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 in the kingdom of heaven.
But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments
will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill;
and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you,
whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;
and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,'
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;
and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.
Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said,
You shall not commit adultery.
But I say to you,
everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.
And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said,
Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.
But I say to you,
whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful -
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.
But I say to you, do not swear at all;
not by heaven, for it is God's throne;
nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
Do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from the evil one."

Reflection (2023)

In the Gospel passage today, we hear Jesus say "not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law," but then he proceeds to say, over and over "You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you," and then he changes what the law said. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? I think the key to understanding that there is no contradiction is what he said first: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." Fulfilling the law is going back to observing what the purpose of the law is – protecting what the value the law is trying to preserve.

Often, by observing the letter of the law, or a literal interpretation of a law, not only can we miss the point, but we can do something contrary to the purpose of the law.

For example, killing is against the law. But if we harbor anger, or we treat others with rudeness or disdain, isn't that what leads us to devalue the life of the other, which then makes killing the other person perfectly acceptable?

Or adultery, most people would agree that faithfulness in marriage is important, but if we allow all those things which separate us or lead us away from our commitment, then it's easy to see how unfaithfulness becomes almost inevitable.

Or divorce – that's become commonplace in our society. In Jewish society, only the man could divorce the woman, but then the woman was charged with adultery if she married again, even if the first marriage was unlawful or invalid. But it was the man who was at fault for what the woman was assigned the blame.

And of course oaths. I always find it laughable when politicians make a big show of how Christian they are taking an oath on this or that copy of the Bible, taking an oath on a Bible that says to *not* take an oath! And how many of those same people who make a show of taking an oath on the Bible proceed to bear false witness and to lie? Taking an oath does nothing to make a person honest, our word that is upheld should be enough.

So what Jesus is saying is forget all the literalism and forget all the show. Rather, live up to what is really important and what is really valuable.

Reflection (2026)

The first reading, from the book of Sirach, says something that seems at odds with our Christian beliefs: "If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you." Don't we believe that faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus is what saves us?

But stop and think about commandments, and particularly about the commandments of Jesus. They are meant to teach us how to live, and following them is how we show that we have faith in Jesus Christ, and therefore can be saved.

What is important is following the meaning and the value that each commandment tries to protect. That is why Jesus says he came "to fulfill" the "law or the prophets." He repeatedly says, "you have heard that it was said," and then he says "but I say to you." He takes the words in the commandment, and tells us what they mean and what the value is that the commandment tries to protect – and thus, he makes the Old Testament commandments into his New Testament commandments, the ones we are called to follow.

15 February 2026
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, you guide us in the ways of righteousness: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you give us your commandments: Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you lead us to eternal salvation: Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Prayer of the Faithful

Almighty Father, your word has been proclaimed, and inspired by your teaching, we turn to you with our petitions:

- for Pope Leo, for strength as he continues to proclaim the values of the Gospel, we pray
- for those entrusted with enforcing the law, that they will serve with fairness, respect, honesty and integrity, we pray
- for peace in the Ukraine, for peace in Sudan, for peace in the Holy Land, and for peace where there is war and violence, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that we will follow the Lord's commandments, we pray
- for those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions

(pause)

for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Merciful Father, we ask you to listen to our prayers, and lead us to follow you more faithfully and more completely. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.