

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, February 15, 2026
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A

A young man once told me something very simple but very honest. He said, "Father, the hardest part of my faith is not believing in God." "The hardest part is choosing Him every day."

Every morning, he said, life places options in front of him: to forgive or to hold a grudge, to be honest or to take shortcuts, to pray or to scroll, to love or to walk away. No thunder from heaven. No voice shouting. Just quiet choices that slowly shape the kind of person he becomes.

That is exactly where today's first reading meets us. The words of Sirach in today's first reading are simple, almost disarming in their clarity: "If you choose, you can keep the commandments...before you are life and death, good and evil, whichever you choose shall be given you." No threats. No coercion. Just a quiet, fatherly invitation.

At the heart of this passage is a truth we often forget: God does not force goodness upon us. He places before us options – and then he respects our freedom enough to let us choose. That alone already tells us something profound about God's commandments. If they were meant to imprison us, he would impose them. Instead, he offers them as a path to life. Every commandment, even the hardest ones, is rooted in love.

St. Augustine famously said, “Love, and do what you will.” He did not mean that love abolishes the law, but that true love fulfills it. When we truly love God and neighbor, the commandments no longer feel like external rules; they become the natural expression of the heart. This is why Jesus can say elsewhere that his yoke is easy and his burden light – not because it demands nothing, but because it is carried in love. The law carried without love feels heavy; the law carried in love becomes freedom.

This is the vision Sirach offers in the first reading. God’s law is not a cage; it is a fence around something precious. It guards the gift of life, protects the heart, and keeps us from wandering into paths that slowly destroy us. St. John Paul II, in *Veritatis Splendor*, teaches that the moral law is not opposed to freedom but is its foundation. Freedom is not the ability to choose anything, but the ability to choose what is good. Without truth and goodness, freedom collapses into slavery – to sin, to selfishness, to destructive habits.

God’s commandments, then, are not threats hanging over us; they are gifts that guard our dignity and lead us toward fullness of life. This is why Sirach dares to say, “If you choose you can keep the commandments.” Grace makes obedience possible. God never commands the impossible.

And so, we come to the heart of the message: God places before us life and death, good and evil – not as a threat, but as an invitation. God looks at us with tenderness and says, “Choose life.” “Choose what heals rather than

harms.” “Choose what builds rather than destroys.” “Choose what leads you closer to Me.”

Sisters and Brothers, the drama of our faith is not played out in extraordinary moments. It is lived in ordinary decisions: how we speak, what we spend our time on, whom we love, what we prioritize, how often we forgive. Every day, often many times a day, God quietly sets before us life and death.

When we see God’s commandments as burdens, obedience feels heavy and faith becomes tiring. But when we begin to see them as blessings, something changes. Obedience becomes an act of love. Freedom becomes the courage to choose what leads to life, even when it costs us something.

Choose life.