The Scribes and the Pharisees propagated that a man is saved himself through the external works of the Law. Jesus rejects this view in today’s Gospel passage, taken from the Sermon on the Mount. For Jesus, justification or sanctification is a grace, a free, strengthening gift from God. Man’s role is one of cooperating with that grace by being faithful to it, using it as God means it to be used.

Jesus in today’s gospel teaches us not to get angry. He is telling us that we have to forgive. If we hold grudges and fail to forgive, He teaches that we will become slaves of sin. But when the people turn the temple into a marketplace Jesus gets angry with them. When the scribes and Pharisees value the law of the Sabbath more than the crippled man to walk, He also gets angry with them. He even calls the scribes as brood of vipers. Even a lot of us believe that to feel angry is a sin. But, feeling something is never a sin in itself. How could this be? A feeling arises in us spontaneously. We cannot prevent ourselves from feeling angry, jealous, bored, lustful, proud or depressed. These feelings come and go, and we cannot make them go away through a pure act of will. Jesus understands this perfectly well.

The anger the Lord talks about in today’s gospel is not the feeling of anger because we have no control over it. It is not the kind of anger that He has with the people in the temple, with the scribes and Pharisees and others. But He is talking about the forbidden anger we have with our brother or sister. It is because this selfish anger nourishes a grudge and keeps anger warm that refuses to die. An anger that is nourished, nurtured, developed through the years. He prohibits acting out this anger in an inappropriate way.

And so, what is the solution to this kind of anger? The solution is mercy, kindness and forgiveness that spring from a heart full of love and forgiveness. We must be forgiving and merciful because God has forgiven us. He calls us to extend mercy and forgiveness towards those who cause us harm and grief.