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-- Let's face it: Jesus was a radical. By that, I don't mean that he shook things up in order to make trouble. I mean he was a radical in the primary sense of the word.

-- *Radical* comes from the Latin word *radix*, which means "root." Jesus got to the root of the matter. And nowhere is that clearer than in this gospel. Here he gets to the root of some of the "big" sins we commit.

-- He speaks of anger as the root cause of murder... of lust as the root cause of adultery... of unnecessary oaths as the cause of lying and outright deception. Any of these could be a good topic for a full homily.

-- My instinct, though, is to concentrate on the first of Jesus' contrasts: *You have heard it said...but I say to you*. That's because, in the last 20 years or so, we have become an increasingly angry culture. Some people have even made an argument that the last election was primarily fed by anger.

-- Of course, anger is nothing new in human history, as Jesus was aware of 2000 years ago. Sometimes hear people say that Jesus was angry at times, with a just anger. And there's some truth to that.

-- But anger wasn't his primary motivation. It was the exception. Jesus came to establish a kingdom of peace and justice. He wasn't a Zealot, preaching armed resistance. He was more of a healer than a divider.

-- Anger and rage, even when there might be some good reason for it, can easily take over our lives to the point where we lose control of it. We can fail to "filter" the most evil thoughts that pop into our head. Often that results in angry posts on blogs, Facebook and other parts of social media.

-- And it doesn't end there. It tends to bleed into our personal lives and relationships. It's all too easy to take out our frustrations from work, school, and even politics, on our family members and loved ones.

-- In the name of so-called honesty we can lower our filters and blurt out hurtful things that we will soon regret. They may not kill someone in body, but they can do great violence to someone's spirit.

-- I know by my personal experience how that can hurt, and I know I've hurt others when I've fallen to that temptation. We all are subject to this temptation, no matter what our personal or political views are.

-- That's why anger is one of the capital sins (just as lust is). Capital sins are called "capital" because they are the source of greater sins. True, not all angry people end up as murderers in the legal sense of the term.

-- But a person who stewes in anger and refuses to move on will inevitably do violence to others, in mind, body or spirit or a combination of those.

-- At best, anger at something that is unjust can motivate you to do something positive to change it. But it will not be positive if we don't move beyond the anger. That is why even just anger can be dangerous.

-- Jesus knew the power of anger. In his day, it drove conflicts between Rome and many of its subjects. In the 20th century, it would lead Germany to blame Jews for their troubles and almost succeed in eliminating them from the face of the earth.

-- In our own time, it drives a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in which each side refuses to let go of their anger over past hurts. And in our own country, it has resulted in a government which is often unable to accomplish even its minimal, necessary tasks.

-- Jesus invites us to let go of that anger, no matter where it comes from and whom it is against. For, in the end, anger will imprison us if left to its own devices.

-- Lose no time. Be reconciled to your brother or sister, he says. That is good advice. We ought to take it.