

Homily of 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A

The first and the Gospel readings present the following challenging statements to us: **"Be holy, I the Lord, your God, am holy."** And, "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." We must not be discouraged by the fact that no one can be holy and perfect as God. I consider the statements as God's invitation to us to participate in his holiness and his perfection, and by so doing we prepare to enter into the fullness of God's holiness and perfection at the end of our earthly journey. We will be unable to exhaust the meaning of this invitation within the few minutes of this homily. However, it will be very enriching to concentrate our reflection on some steps to participating in God's holiness and perfection presented to us in the readings.

First reading; we participate in God's holiness in the following ways:

"You shall bear no hatred for your brother or sister in your heart." St John explains why and how hatred is sinful: "Anyone who hates a brother or a sister is the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them" (1John 2:11). "Anyone who hates a brother or a sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him" (1John 3:15).

"Though you may reprove your fellow citizen, do not incur sin because of him." We become accomplice when we are silent before evil. We are, therefore, encouraged to speak up against evil. However, St Paul advises us that we are to speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

"Take no revenge and cherish no grudges against any of your people." This command does not allow anyone to take the law into one's hand. We are to trust God who "repays everyone for what they have done; he brings on them what their conduct deserves" (Job 34:11). St Paul writes, "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." A way of understanding this command is; "In everything, do to others what you would have them to do to you, this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Second reading: "Brothers and sisters: **Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**" St Paul continues in another chapter, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We are to avoid actions and behaviors capable of profaning our bodies that are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel: **Offer no resistance to one who is evil, turn the other cheek as well, hand over your cloak as well, go for two miles, do not turn your back to one who wants to borrow, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, God makes his sun to rise on the bad and the good and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.**

These teachings saying of Jesus can be understood as follows:

- We are not to be violent.
- We are not to repay evil with evil, but repay evil with blessing.
- We are not to take revenge at those who treat us badly.
- We are to show mercy and not turn our back to those in need, especially when we have every rational reason to turn our back.
- We are to treat those who hate us kindly, and pray for them.
- We are not to discriminate.

As mentioned at the beginning of this reflection, we may never be as holy and as perfect as God, but we can participate in God's holiness and perfection by following the steps to holiness and perfection contained in today's readings.

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