

The Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A –
18/19 February 2017 –
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Leviticus 2:17-18

- “. . . Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy. You shall not bear hatred . . . in your heart. . . Take no revenge and cherish no grudge . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . .”

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 103 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

- “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you . . . all belong to you, and you to Christ, and Christ to God.”

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 5:38-48

- “For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? . . . So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect?”

Perfect does not equate to the human understanding to strive for perfection . . . but is a call to be blameless; holy . . . be instruments of divine mercy to those who journey on the path to holiness but occasionally falter . . . it is the presence and manifestation of compassion . . .

Recompense = “compensation for a service rendered or damage incurred; to pay for; to return in kind”

I. These scripture readings are **difficult** readings this weekend . . . They ask us to be what we far too often just don't believe is attainable . . . **"holy"** . . . or what we just don't fully comprehend . . . **"temples . . . temples of God and the Spirit of God [that] dwells in [us]"** . . . They ask us to act and live in particular ways that are, at best, not always easy . . . **"not" bearing hatred in our hearts . . . taking no revenge and cherishing no grudge . . . loving our neighbor as ourself . . . even "loving" our enemies . . .**

But, before continuing . . . I have a question to ask each of us . . . and that includes me . . . don't respond just yet . . . but just take a moment to seriously think about your response . . . here goes:

How many of us . . . again, myself included . . . believe that you . . . me . . . are, in certain circumstances or situations, MORE powerful than God? Again, don't answer just yet . . . just think about the question for a moment . . .

. **O.K. . . . How many of us . . . again, myself included . . . believe that you . . . me . . . are, in certain circumstances or situations, MORE powerful than God? Raise your hands (*Allow for a response, then continue . . .*)**

II. I will return to this . . . but let's go back to where we started . . . and that is, the great **difficulty** with these readings . . .

Among some of the greatest challenges of life . . . morally, spiritually and certainly “humanly” is the reality that most all . . . if not **all** of us have encountered “enemies” . . . perhaps, been paralyzed by jealousy . . . been the recipient of a particularly “bitter” word from someone that ruined our day . . . demonized another when we have encountered opposition . . . been unable to be sympathetic to another when we've been misunderstood . . . found it difficult to be warm when bitterness has been experienced or felt coming from another . . . become paranoid when we have felt threatened . . . been unable to forgive when another has refused our forgiveness . . . closed the doors of our hearts when we have encountered coldness and rejection . . . been steeped in self-pity and, as a result, been unable to forgive someone . . . bottom line . . . **been unable to love** . . . really love and forgive as Jesus did . . . Yes . . . these readings are **very, very difficult** this weekend . . . perhaps even to the point of any one of us thinking they are impossible to fully embrace or give way to a change in us!

Aha! If that is the case . . . for any of us . . . for the above or any other difficult, loving act . . . then, I would suggest that for any for which this is true . . . you . . . perhaps I . . . **do believe** that **there are certain circumstances or situations** when we, whether we realize it or not, act as if we are more powerful than God!

III. Consider this: Just how did Jesus do it? How did he survive . . . “retain peace of mind, warmth in his heart, graciousness in his speech, joy in his life, resiliency in his efforts, the capacity to be grateful, and [even] a sense of humor in the face of misunderstanding, jealousy, hatred, and death threats?”

He did it by, as one homilist noted, “recognizing that this was, singularly, the most important challenge of his life and mission, and, under the weight of that imperative, by falling to his knees to ask for the help of the One who can do in us what we cannot [possibly] do for ourselves [or on our own] . . . He turned to the Father . . . in fervent prayer . . . the One who shared the power and strength and grace He confidently could draw upon . . . the power and strength and grace He, with the Spirit . . . bound them together.

Each and every time any of us . . . or anyone else for that matter . . . throws up our hands and cries out . . . “I just can’t change” . . . I just can’t move beyond my

jealousy . . . the bitter word . . . the opposition . . . the lack of being understood . . . the bitterness experienced . . . the attitude or action of another that causes me to feel threatened . . . the inability to forgive even when the forgiveness is not accepted . . . the feelings that come from the coldness or rejection of another . . . the feelings of self-pity when convinced we have been wronged . . . Each and every time we do this . . . we declare that “God cannot change our hearts . . . God cannot bring peace and calm and wholeness to this situation . . .” . . . ultimately taking the position that since God is not capable of doing this . . . perhaps, not necessarily we as individuals possess more power than God . . . but the experience . . . the situation . . . the feelings . . . these all have a greater power for they control us . . . they control me . . .

IV. Yes, . . . these are very **difficult** readings . . . but what they ask . . . the call that comes forth from them is not impossible . . . for if we, like Jesus, “fall to our knees and ask for the help of the One who can do in us what we cannot [possibly] do for ourselves [or on our own] . . .” . . . once again, the power of God that is greater than any other power will not only take hold . . . in time . . . but will transform us . . . our lives depend on this conviction . . .