

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A
February 19, 2023

1st Reading: Leviticus 19: 1 – 2, 17 – 18.

Be holy as God is holy!

Psalm: Psalm 103:1 – 2, 3 – 4, 8, 10, 12 – 13.

God is kind and merciful.

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 3: 16 – 23.

You are God's Temple.

Gospel: Matthew 5: 38 – 48. L79A

Always turn the other cheek, love your enemy.

God is good, **All the time**; All the time, **God is good!**

Friends, I must admit these readings troubled me all week realizing that on Monday evening a 43-year-old, Anthony McRae, shot up MSU campus killing 3 students, Brian Frazier, Alexandria Verner, and Arielle Anderson; and critically injuring 5 others. Oh, my God not again. Then only days later I hear about another shooting, this time in a mall in El Paso. Then last night I hear about a small town in Mississippi where a man shot his former spouse and children. My God what is wrong with us, what are we thinking? Alongside of all that our Scriptures tell us to be holy as God is holy, that we are God's Temple, and to love those who injure you; Are you serious? The answer from God is a resounding yes, as a matter of fact, it is the only way!

To help me through troubling situations, God gave me a quote from Dr. Suess, it help me through my attack as well, "When something bad happens, you have 3 choices, you can let it define you; you can let it destroy you; or you can let it strengthen you." I choose the later in the hope that we can build a better world.

Now let's take a closer look at the Word selected for us. In our first reading from Leviticus, the Jewish book of laws, kind of like our code of canon law, and the 3rd book of the Hebrew Scriptures; so, it is part of the Pentateuch or what our Jewish brothers and sisters hold as the "torah," we receive a long thin banner of nine words that are packed with a rich theological meaning. "Be holy because I, God, your God, am holy. It is because of the relationship God, who is holy, has chosen to have with us; we are to emulate that holiness and demonstrate it through our love of our neighbors.

Then Paul through his teaching/preaching to the Corinthian Community reminds them directly that they are God's Temple. Something very holy, right? Further he reminds them/us that God's Spirit has taken up residence in us: think about that! There is more than enough reason to treat ourselves as holy. Paul adds that he wants us all to remember that what our world calls smart, God calls stupid, and if we want to find true wisdom, we need to be fools for God. Everything we need we have been given: the world, life, death, the present, the future, it is all ours, and we are privileged to be in union with the Christ, who is in union with whom? Right, God, who is holy. We are getting it from all sides.

Then, as Matthew is coming to the close of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, acting as the new Moses, turns everything on its head and instructs his disciples, and anyone who wants to follow him, to love their enemies, those who do them harm and those who come from outside of their group. For me this was particularly hard this week considering the happenings at MSU. And as we catch our breath, Jesus is telling us to act like grown-ups. We are kingdom subjects. It is expected that we will live like one. Live out your God-given identity. Live generously and graciously towards others, the way God lives toward each one of us, God's beloved. This teaching was eye-opening for me and filled with hope and possibility of the final line: "Be perfect as your father is perfect."

In my reflections on this I was reminded of a time Fr. O'Leary, and I were at a clergy training, and he leaned over to me and said, "joe, we don't have a clue as to how much God cares for and loves us like crazy." So, let's ask and pray for the grace necessary to live like we believe that, and as we receive the Eucharist remember that we are Temples of the Holy. Hold that in our hearts!

Let me end with another quote of Fr. O'Leary which was on his wake service program:

"To do great deeds in life is not enough. We must be great people. We must use our capacity for intimacy. We must be open to close friendships. In a word, we must be good at 'loving.' Loving is the power we have to be most like God. In the end, I think our lives will be measured on the quality of our human relationships. This is where we must put our energies and efforts. At the end of our lives, we will see clearly that everything else is piffle." (*fiddle-faddle*)

God is good. **All the time.** All the time. **God is good!**