**“Be Holy”**

All our readings today point us to how to be holy. Holiness is God’s desire for all of us. Holiness means being free from sin. It means being filled with the Holy Spirit. It means becoming a child of God. Though we cannot be gods, God asks us to be holy as He is holy. It is a challenge for us to imitate God as we live our lives on this earth until we meet Him in heaven.

In our first reading, God through Moses gave the Israelites the road map that leads to holiness. He told them, they do not have to physically kill their brothers and sisters, because hating their neighbors in their hearts is just as evil. He told them correcting their brethren, should done with love so they would not sin themselves. Why, because of hate for the other person that might be spewing out of them if correction is not done out of love.

God tells them that He would come and dwell in those who obey His commandments and acts in a righteous manner. It is God’s holiness that would make that person holy. Just as we cannot be saved by our own power, so can we not become holy by our own power. Our holiness comes from the grace of God acting in us.

God also told them to turn the other check when they were offended by their neighbor. Instead of taking revenge, they should forgive and pray for their enemies. God said that is when they would love their neighbor as themselves. We might say, God was probably asking them, who among you would want evil to befall you personally? Only somebody who is insane and who is not in their right mind would want evil to befall them self. A sane person would always want good or happiness for themselves.

The word of God is a living word and all His teachings from of old still applies to us today. And they would be applicable to all until the end of time. A time when we would be judged according to our deeds. Through faith, we are expected to respond to God’s unconditional love, in love, by doing His will. When we respond positively to God’s love, we will get more grace and become holy.

In our second reading, St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians tells us that any baptized Christian has received the Holy Spirit and has become the temple of God. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us the temple of God. Our hearts become the tabernacle of God. Paul warns us that if the temple of God is destroyed by anyone, that person would be destroyed by God. It means that once we have been baptized, we should keep our temple clean of sin and be careful not to let it be corrupted by false teachings.

Paul also warned those who teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ that their teaching must be authentic. He compared false teachings to wisdom of this world. In essence, Paul is telling us that God’s ways are not our ways. What seems to us as stupid and unreasonable about God’s ways, are actually the wisdom of God and what we think as weakness in God’s ways, are strength. It is not for us to tell God how to run the world. Our response to God is to keep His commandments.

Similarly, other people may think it is foolish for Catholics to struggle to keep a marriage together when a divorce would be easier or some may condemn Catholics as heartless in her teachings that abortion is a grave sin when others insist it is a woman’s choice. They may think it is foolish to think that bread can become the body of Christ and wine His blood. But we Catholics know that the ways of God are wise and the ways of the world are foolishness.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that taking revenge and holding a grudge are not wise in the economy of God. Jesus calls us to respond to injustice by promoting justice and not result to anger. He teaches that violence leads to more violence. By not retaliating, our response might change the other person’s attitude. It could transform them to realize that violence does not lead to peace.

What God wants is for us to be forgiving of those who wrong us, gentle, kind, and loving in interacting with each other. Jesus wants us to be people who love others not only by words, but by action. Love your enemies is what Jesus ask us to do; and pray for those who persecute us. That means putting our love into action.

Precisely, Jesus is asking us to love those who are unlovable just as God who knows the future, embraces all people in the hope that they would change. We are supposed to love those who are divorced and those who might have had abortion. God respects our freewill and always hope we will be open to come back to Him.

As we come with utmost reverence to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for His grace to be holy.