**7th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [23rd February, 2014]**

READINGS: Lev. 19:1-2, 7-18 / Ps. 103 / 1 Cor. 3:16-23 / Matthew 5:38-48

THEME: BE HOLY, FOR I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM HOLY

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Every good parent wants his/her child to achieve what he/she has achieved or even do better. E.g. A parent who is a nurse may want the child to become a doctor. In the case of God, however, no one can outdo him, so he wants us, his children, to be like him. So He says: ‘BE HOLY FOR I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM HOLY’ (Lev. 19:2). Jesus Christ tells us the same thing in other words: ‘BE PERFECT AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT’ (Mt. 5:48).

What then is God’s holiness in relation to us? HOLINESS of God means a lot but let us limit ourselves to only two points found in today’s reading:

* God’s loving kindness is perfect; and
* God’s mercy is perfect.

Because of his perfect loving kindness, according to the gospel reading, God provides rain and sunshine for us all (to good as well as bad persons). In a similar vein, because of his perfect mercy, he overlooks the sins of the bad ones and allows them to also enjoy the rain and sunshine. The responsorial Psalm (Ps. 103) also underscores the mercy and forgiveness of God: ‘The Lord is… slow to anger and rich in mercy. He does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults.’

Therefore, beloved, to be ‘holy as our Father is’ or ‘perfect as he is’:

* We should show loving kindness towards one another.
* We should be merciful and forgive those who offend us.

LOVING KINDNESS

No good parent would be happy if his wealthy child does not help the needy ones. Similarly God is not happy when we who are in the position to help others, neglect to do so. Thus Jesus says in the gospel: ‘Give to **anyone** who asks’. He does not say that we should give to only ‘good’ people.

BE MERCIFUL AND FORGIVING

No good parent is happy when his children quarrel and fight each other. Similarly God is not happy when we hate each other, retaliate and fight among ourselves. Hence from the first reading we hear: ‘You must not bear hatred for your brother’ (Lev. 19:17).

Moses met a situation, in which if you took one of my eyes, my brothers would kill you; if you killed my son, I would kill your whole family; etc. – the revenge and retaliation was far more than the initial offense. So, Moses called for what seemed to be a bit fair: ‘An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot’ (Ex. 21:23-25 / Lev. 24:19, 20 / Dt. 19:21).

But Jesus wants us to be more merciful than that, for which father or mother would be glad to see a son’s hand cut off by another son and the second son retaliate; soon he would have only amputees in his house; or see a daughter take a second daughter’s eye, with the latter retaliating; soon he would have only blind daughters. Thus, someone says, ‘an eye for an eye’ and ‘a tooth for a tooth’ and soon the whole world would be blind and toothless.

Furthermore, let us imagine a poor man’s son damages the windscreen of your car; he has no car for you to damage, so what happens? The best solution therefore is not to retaliate or revenge, that is why Jesus says: ‘If someone slaps you on the right cheek, give him the other cheek.’ My brothers and sisters, are we planning vengeance against someone? Is there someone we have not forgiven for days, weeks, months or years? Who is he or she? Jesus says if they ask for our shirt, we should add our coat. So beloved, let us go the extra mile to forgive; let us be perfect as our heavenly Father is; let us be holy as our God is! May the holiness of God radiate in our lives as long ago it reflected on the face of Moses anytime he encountered the Lord God. Amen!