

Homily Helps and Petitions for the 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle A (23 February 2020)

Homily Helps

† Comment for the day:

In today's passage from the Book of Leviticus, we read: "Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God am holy." The scripture then underscores that holiness has to do with the quality of our relationships with those around us. To be holy, therefore, is to respond to the needs of others.

Over the last two centuries, industrialization and the exploitation of natural resources have produced marked wealth and material progress. Yet they have also contributed to a wide-scale environmental destruction. The radical changes in the ecology of our planet, especially the atmosphere and the oceans, now threaten the very survival of the future generations. This new reality challenges us spiritually and religiously. God calls us to extend compassion to the most vulnerable, to children not yet born, and to our fellow creatures on God's earth. How will we respond to this contemporary call to holiness?

For a preacher, today's readings present a wonderful opportunity to share examples of people who act with love, mercy and compassion towards their global neighbors. Volunteering in a food pantry, working to end conflict and violence in our communities, welcoming refugees and the homeless, protecting the unborn and the poor, and working to protect the environment at home and at large – these are some of the ways to show love of neighbor and respond to the vocation to holiness.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds us that every Christian is the temple of God. How radical claim that is, especially if we consider that in our society and its institutions, market forces and the nearly sacrosanct right to accumulate profit often trump human dignity. We can become irate when we witness the rapaciousness that seems to mark our society in these days. However, we do well to bear in mind that the call to holiness may also mean charitably engaging those who harm others or God's creation, our common home.

Finally, in the Gospel Jesus calls us to turn the other cheek and love our enemies. One might well ask, "Are we to passively acquiesce to evil?" In first-century Mediterranean culture, hitting someone with the back of the right hand was used by the dominant members of the upper class to humiliate the underclass. Turning the other cheek was in fact a creative way to stand up for one's human dignity, rather than cringe in shame. In our own day, what are some of the creative ways we as individuals and as a Church can respond to attacks upon our communities, our dignity, and the neighborhoods in which we live? In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis boldly stood up for the poor and for the integrity of our common home, but he did it with love and compassion, summoning all to praise God. How can we learn from this example as we engage in our own struggles?

Homily Helps (cont.)

† Scripture passages to note:

Leviticus 19: Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy... Though you may have to reprove your fellow citizen, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

1 Corinthians 3: Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Matthew 5: Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.* But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one as well.

† Passages from *Laudato Si'* to note:

Some countries with scarce resources will require assistance in adapting to the effects (of climate change) already being produced, which affect their economies. As the bishops of Bolivia have stated, "the countries which have benefited from a high degree of industrialization, at the cost of enormous emissions of greenhouse gases, have a greater responsibility for providing a solution to the problems they have caused." (#170)

Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. (#179)

For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change "models of global development"; this will entail a responsible reflection on "the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications". It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. (#194)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: For our Church that we may grow in holiness by showing mercy and care to our global neighbors and safeguarding our common home, let us pray to the Lord....

Option 2: For the children and youth of our parish that, with our help, they may learn creative alternatives to violence, let us pray to the Lord....

Further Resources

Feedback: Info@CatholicClimateCovenant.org

Webpage: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/english-homily-help

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