

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

February 19, 2017



*Grant, we pray, almighty God, that,
always pondering spiritual things,
we may carry out in both word and deed
that which is pleasing to you.*

*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Collect for the Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

As for each week, the Liturgy of the Word gives guidance for our daily life. The Opening Collect for today's Mass calls us to be as Mary, pondering the actions of God in our daily life. We need to recall that we are spiritual, physical and psychological beings. Our words have to be evidenced in our daily actions and deeds.

Today's first reading is taken from the Book of Leviticus, which is really the third chapter of the Pentateuch, seeing the first chapter as the book of Genesis, the second as Exodus, the third as Leviticus, the fourth as Numbers and the last being Deuteronomy.

"The name "Leviticus" was given to the third book of the Pentateuch by the ancient Greek translators because a good part of this book deals with concerns of the priests, who are of the tribe of Levi, one of the Twelve Tribes of Jacob (Israel). The book mainly treats cultic matters (i.e., sacrifices and offerings, purity and holiness, the priesthood, the operation of the sanctuary, and feast days) but is also interested in various behavioral, ethical, and economic issues (e.g., sexual practices, idolatrous worship, treatment of others, the sale of land, slavery). The goal of the laws is not merely legislative. For the most part they cohere as a system and attempt to inculcate a way of life in the book's hearers and readers. "



(taken from the Introduction of this book in the New American Bible)

As normal, this reading is connected to the gospel for this week (Matthew 5:38-48).

Reflecting and praying with this particular reading (Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18) we see a play on words, *whole and holy*, which imply unity and oneness.

You shall not hate any of your kindred in your heart.

Reprove your neighbor openly so that you do not incur sin because of that person.

Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Struggling to live this section of the gospel, in our present world, it is difficult to *offer no resistance to one who is evil* (Matthew 5: 39). Going further, the following, *you should love your neighbor and hate your enemy*, is expanded. Jesus says *Love your enemies and pray*

for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father (Matt 5:44). At MTU, with ROTC we need to see these as *peace-keepers* rather than *war-makers*.



In our world today, this is crazy. This makes no sense to people living in the competitive, success driven, consumer culture of the United States. This makes no sense if we must be "number one." It makes no sense if our central value is "me first" or "America First." This makes no sense if we need to defend ourselves from other armies and enemies.

Jesus proclaimed a radical message about God's love for all of us. Jesus offered a radical invitation to love one another without condition – to love those who are different than ourselves, to love even our enemies. In a world with many examples of hatred, violence, war, and unnecessary death, Jesus appears with the radical call for us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to trust in the way of peace, to be especially concerned for those most in need, and to take the risk to welcome those who are refugees or homeless.

Can the followers of Jesus today be faithful to this call, or will the vision of active loving nonviolence get lost and forgotten even by people who call themselves Christian?

This is crazy. This makes no sense to people living in the competitive, consumer culture of the United States. This will not fit into our military strategies. This will not help us dominate the world. This will endanger our security. This will not help us make a profit.

Can the followers of Jesus today be faithful to this call, or will the vision of active loving nonviolence get lost and forgotten even by people who call themselves Christian?

Can we live what we hear in the Book of Leviticus: "You shall not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart. ... Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against any of your people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself"?

Do we really believe that this is the way God wants us to live? That this is the way of Jesus?

In today's selection from the first letter to the Corinthians Paul reminds us: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God."

<https://educationforjustice.org/resources/lectionary-reflections-seventh-sunday-ordinary-time-february-19-2017>

Taking Scripture as a whole we recall: *God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* (Genesis 1:27) and from today's Gospel we hear *So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:38). In the Gospels *perfect* occurs only in Matthew 5:38 and in Matthew 18:21. The Lucan parallel (Lk 6:36) demands that the disciples be merciful rather than being perfect. Since we are gifted with *free will*, we make a choice to be perfect and emulate the ways of God our Father.

The unity of the people of Israel requires loving all the members of the tribe. This principle requires negotiation, which means searching for the value of the lives of our neighbors. This process is very time consuming, understanding the heart of the person.

Going back into history, we have references to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, speaking of the just war theory. When we pray with this section of the Gospel of Matthew we are reminded that we cannot ask more of a person than was given in their life. Looking at the violence in our world today, the gospel may seem very difficult to live. Still, if we look at the principles of the just war theory we are deeply challenged.

Principles of the Just War

- *A just war can only be waged as a last resort. All non-violent options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.*
- *A war is just only if it is waged by a legitimate authority. Even just causes cannot be served by actions taken by individuals or groups who do not constitute an authority sanctioned by whatever the society and outsiders to the society deem legitimate.*
- *A just war can only be fought to redress a wrong suffered. For example, self-defense against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause (although the justice of the cause is not sufficient). Further, a just war can only be fought with "right" intentions: the only permissible objective of a just war is to redress the injury.*
- *A war can only be just if it is fought with a reasonable chance of success. Deaths and injury incurred in a hopeless cause are not morally justifiable.*
- *The ultimate goal of a just war is to re-establish peace. More specifically, the peace established after the war must be preferable to the peace that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought.*
- *The violence used in the war must be proportional to the injury suffered. States are prohibited from using force not necessary to attain the limited objective of addressing the injury suffered.*
- *The weapons used in war must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must be taken to avoid killing civilians. The deaths of civilians are justified only if they are unavoidable victims of a deliberate attack on a military target.*

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jasingle/justwar.html>



In 1972, Blessed Pope Paul VI, issuing his message for World Day of Peace, stated *if you want peace, work for justice*. This is the cornerstone for the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Each day many of us pray *THE LORD'S PRAYER*. It is also an integral part of the Communion Rite of every Mass.

*Our Father, Who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has the following teachings about the Lord's Prayer:

2803 *After we have placed ourselves in the presence of God our Father to adore and to love and to bless him, the Spirit of adoption stirs up in our hearts seven petitions, seven blessings. The first three, more theological, draw us toward the glory of the Father; the last four, as ways toward him, commend our wretchedness to his grace. "Deep calls to deep."*

2804 *The first series of petitions carries us toward him, for his own sake: thy name, thy kingdom, thy will! It is characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. In none of the three petitions do we mention ourselves; the burning desire, even anguish, of the beloved Son for his Father's glory seizes us: "hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done...." These three supplications were already answered in the saving sacrifice of Christ, but they are henceforth directed in hope toward their final fulfillment, for God is not yet all in all.*

2805 *The second series of petitions unfolds with the same movement as certain Eucharistic epicleses: as an offering up of our expectations, that draws down upon itself the eyes of the Father of mercies. They go up from us and concern us from this very moment, in our present world: "give us . . . forgive us . . . lead us not . . . deliver us . . ." The fourth and fifth petitions concern our life as such - to be fed and to be healed of sin; the last two concern our battle for the victory of life - that battle of prayer.*

2806 *By the three first petitions, we are strengthened in faith, filled with hope, and set aflame by charity. Being creatures and still sinners, we have to petition for us, for that "us" bound by the world and history, which we offer to the boundless love of God. For through the name of his Christ and the reign of his Holy Spirit, our Father accomplishes his plan of salvation, for us and for the whole world.*

As we pray the Lord's Prayer, may we live these words.