



## YEAR A – FEBRUARY 23, 2020

The Scripture Readings today remind us that we have a challenge from God to become holy while we are here on earth. In the book of Leviticus (19:1-2, 17-18), the first reading today, God challenges us to be holy because the Lord our God is holy. The inspired writer goes on to give us examples of how we can do that. He says, “Do not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart.” As you know, brother and sister in this context does not mean only siblings. It means every

man, every woman and every child. All of them are our brothers and sisters in God's eyes because we all belong to the same family – the family of God.

But what are we to do in a conflict situation where we want to be reconciled with a brother or sister, but they do not want to do that? In those instances, we are asked to turn them over to God in prayer and trust God, who loves them as much as he loves us. God is not finished with them. Our prayers for them may be the grace they need to come to their senses.

God also tells us in the first reading, “Do not seek revenge.” Revenge always has unanticipated consequences and those consequences always harm the person seeking revenge. Consider the wisdom of this advice, “If you seek revenge, begin by digging two graves!”

A “spirit of revenge” can become all consuming. It can rob a person of peace of mind and begin to destroy that person from the inside. It eats away not only at personal holiness but also at physical wellbeing. The physical results of refusing to forgive have been well documented.

We have the capacity and ability to forgive. It should be noted that there is no healing without forgiveness. Refusing to forgive is like drinking poison and expecting the other guy to die.

In the second reading today (1 Corinthians 3:16-23), St. Paul reminds us that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. How often during the day do you make yourself conscious of that reality? The third person of the Blessed Trinity is sent to us by Jesus with a purpose in mind. What does that purpose mean to you?

St. Paul challenges us to do nothing that would defile that “temple” (the “dwelling”) of the Holy Spirit. It means we must occasionally clean house. It means we must name our sins and let them go. An examination of conscience at the end of each day is one way to do that. It's a recommended practice in every school of spirituality. In order to “see” our sins clearly at the end of the day, we must first remove those biblical beams from our eyes. There are seven of them. We call them the capital sins.

Finally, in the Gospel (Matthew 5:38-48), Jesus says, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Is that even possible? Jesus says yes. He says, “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” Is he serious? Yes, he is!

Love one another  
as I have  
loved you.  
John 15:12

For a few moments in prayerful silence, reflect on what the Scripture Readings say to you today. What do they ask you to do?