

- I always enjoy reading the Jewish Torah—what we Christians term the “Pentateuch”—the first five books of the Bible. There is a lot of our religious history there, and many simple, direct moral norms for us to follow...many of which are still binding upon us, by the way.
- The sacrificial rites? No; because Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was the completely and eternally effective sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins...which is disobedience to God, and thus disobedience to the absolute Good, which God is.
- The dietary laws? No; as the Catechism tells us, Jesus reveals the meaning of the dietary laws through a divine interpretation: *“Whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him... (Thus he declared all foods clean). What comes out of a man defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, comes evil thoughts...”*...and all the forms of sin. (CCC 582, Mark 7:18-21)
- The dietary laws also emphasized, I think, the exclusivity of the people of God prior to Jesus, which itself emphasized the exclusivity of those who will attain the kingdom of Heaven through right action—observance of the teaching of God.
- But dietary laws were eliminated by Christ to emphasize that ALL peoples of the world can come to God through Jesus...ALL were invited to the banquet of the Lord...as was told Peter in a vision in the Acts of the Apostles: *“‘What God has cleansed you must not call common,’”* (Acts 11:9 RSV)...and Peter, after witnessing the Holy Spirit descend upon the non-Jewish Gentiles, would tell others: *“‘If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?’ When [his hearers] heard this...they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.’”* (Acts 11:17-18 RSV)
- And we see this emphasized all throughout the New Testament—possibly no more so than in the book of Revelation, in which we read of St. John’s vision of the throne of God: *“I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every*

*nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...*” (Revelation 7:9 RSV)

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- “Well...thanks for the info, Father, but how does that help me right now?”
  - Simple. By remembering the mercy of God to ourselves, and reflecting such mercy as best we can to the world. To be gracious to others as God has been so gracious to us.
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  - Today we have that very daunting, and yet essential, exhortation from God: *“Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy.”*
  - How do I do that? First of all, and essentially, by knowing what Jesus (God) teaches in both His words and actions, and being determined to follow Him as His devoted student and disciple.
  - How much time do we spend on TV, web-surfing, texting, games etc., each day—the vast majority of which is simply entertainment ...of little or no import. Is this why we hurry out of church...or never go to daily Mass? Really? Squeezing in a few more minutes of entertainment...or screaming at Facebook posts?
  - But how much time do we spend with the Gospels, with scripture, with the Catechism—things that really matter.
  - Even professionals will spend hours weekly with professional reading just to keep up. And yet...what is more important than keeping up and expanding our knowledge of what leads to eternal life?
  - Early morning is often best...before the infinite—and yet lesser—cares of the world captivate our daily concern. But everyone and everyone’s situation is different; utilize the best time that works for you. I know it’s hard to read scripture when you’re dragging the kids out of bed and shoving biscuits into their mouths to get them to school.
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2017

- Echoing that theme of “*Be holy, for I am holy*”, Jesus exhorts us today in the Gospel: “*You...must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” (Matthew 5:48 RSV)
- A tall order, to be sure. Immediately thoughts of our weaknesses and sins assault us: “*How is that possible? I am not God.*”
- But, as the old saying goes, “the longest journey begins with a single step”...and the critical first step is knowing in which direction to go—the direction of Christ and His Church—impelled onwards and steadfastly by the Spirit of God given us in the sacraments—a spirit of self-giving and self-forgetfulness.
- In other words, perfection consists in loving God completely, and loving our neighbor as well with whole heart...or, as the first reading put it: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”
- And that love of neighbor is centered most of all around forgiveness, for Jesus assures us that without our own forgiving of others, God will not forgive. Read Matthew 6 and 18.
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- In our contentious political climate, that also means not insulting, hating, or vitriol towards others. After all, what good does that do? It simply perpetuates disrespect and hatred and vitriol.
- Thoughtful criticism is certainly valid, and even desirable—but always keeping charity in view of the greater good for not only the group, but also for the individual—whether president, senator, judge, clerk, or whatever. Sts. Peter and Paul are both adamant on that point in their letters...and, as Paul writes: “*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*” (Romans 13:10 RSV)...and that law of love admits no exclusions.
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- ...for St. Paul tells us that of faith, hope and love, love is greatest of all... (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:13)
- And, as God IS love...boundless love... the more we love, the more we forgive...the more we are like God...and the more holy... the more perfect...we become.

- May he carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever (and ever). Amen. (Hebrews 13:21 NAB)

## Reading 1

[Lv 19:1-2, 17-18](#)

The LORD said to Moses,  
“Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them:  
Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy.

“You shall not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart.  
Though you may have to reprove your fellow citizen,  
do not incur sin because of him.  
Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against any of your people.  
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.  
I am the LORD.”

[Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13](#)

## Responsorial Psalm

R. (8a) **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
and all my being, bless his holy name.2017-02-19-Yr\_A\_7th\_Sunday\_OT-Fr\_Glenn  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits.

R. **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

He pardons all your iniquities,  
heals all your ills.  
He redeems your life from destruction,  
crowns you with kindness and compassion.

R. **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.  
Not according to our sins does he deal with us,  
nor does he requite us according to our crimes.

R. **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he put our transgressions from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

R. **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

[1 Cor 3:16-23](#)  
**Reading 2**

Brothers and sisters:

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

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person;  
for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.

Let no one deceive himself.

If any one among you considers himself wise in this age,  
let him become a fool, so as to become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God,  
for it is written:

*God catches the wise in their own ruses,*  
and again:

*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,*  
*that they are vain.*

So let no one boast about human beings, for everything belongs to you,  
Paul or Apollos or Cephas,  
or the world or life or death,  
or the present or the future:  
all belong to you, and you to Christ, and Christ to God.

[Mt 5:38-48](#)  
**Gospel**

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.

If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic,  
hand over your cloak as well.

Should anyone press you into service for one mile,  
go for two miles.

Give to the one who asks of you,  
and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

“You have heard that it was said,

*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*

But I say to you, love your enemies

and pray for those who persecute you,

that you may be children of your heavenly Father,

for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,

and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?

Do not the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet your brothers only,

what is unusual about that?

Do not the pagans do the same?

So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”