



From the Office of the President

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REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

**Homily for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
St. John Francis Regis Chapel
February 19th, 2017
11:00 a.m. Memorial Mass**

Note: In Gratitude, Memorial Mass Program was started by Bernie Langfield

Leviticus 19:12, 17-18
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
Matthew 5:38-48

“Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God am holy.”

“You are the temple of God...the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

“You must be perfected as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

What would our lives be like if we really believed these statements?

The conventional wisdom, which Israel fought, is that God alone is holy; that ancient Israel was right—correct in never creating an image of God, graven or otherwise, because you cannot image the ultimate, the Holy. Israel wrestled with the conundrum that despite ourselves, despite what God has said, we are NOT created in the IMAGE and LIKENESS of God...God is apart, aloof, *totaliter aliter*, as the Scholastic theologians would say it.

But something happened to Israel. Somewhere along the line they began to see that they too were called to be set apart. But it got, as they say, “complicated.” They were a “royal priesthood, a people set apart,” special to the Lord. Hence the Mosaic Law in all of its rigor: rules about what to eat and how to eat it; rules of exclusion to remind them of their special status, rules about whom to marry and when to make love; rules about how to treat fellow Israelites as well as foreigners and the aliens in their midst and enemies. God included all of these in Holiness, this being special...but if everyone is special, no one is special. It defies logic; it defies common sense. It’s complicated!

It was not enough. The Law was not enough. Why? Because to simply live by the Law is just more of the conventional wisdom. Minimalism: God doesn’t stop at the minimum—we are called to be like God: holy and have our limited being perfected.

Ask yourself—have you ever broken a bad habit or stopped a particular kind of sin simply because the law says not to do it?



The point is the same here. External compulsion is not enough. Law is never enough. Only love is enough.

~“You have heard the commandment, ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’ Justice. But what I say to you is: offer no resistance to injury.”

~“You have heard the commandment, ‘You shall love your countryman but hate your enemy.’ My commandment is: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

God’s Wisdom lies here. Real love is radical. The love of God calls us to be more than survivors; it calls us to thrive, to give life when we receive death.

But let’s be for real! We all have angers—angers which we cannot, it would seem, let go; angers which make enemies of certain people—and that seems justified. What about rape and sexual abuse? What about substance abuse? What about racial exclusivity? What about dealing with people sworn to destroy us?

Love doesn’t mean leaving your brains at the door of the church. Yes, anger is real. Hurt is real. But God’s love is more real than all these things. The only way to stop these things is to make them stop with me.

“When I see my own resistance to the gospels, how can I be surprised that our church seems to ignore what he said? How can I be upset if a nation would think it sheer idiocy? Try forgiving the creep down the street, much less [the leaders of Isis]. Our resistance to the gospel is all of a piece. To hold myself not accountable is to hold my nation or church not accountable. To exempt my nation or church from the truth is to exempt myself” (Kavanaugh, *The Word Embodied*, 29).

“Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God am holy.”

“You are the temple of God...the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

“You must be perfected as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

What we confess is not magic; it is merely radical. We confess Jesus Christ who was one with God, came to earth and lived all the pain we experience. We confess Christ, and Christ crucified; the Christ who says God allows the sun to rise on the bad and the good; God allows the rain to fall on those who cheat as well as the cheated; on racists and saints.

So...where to start? If you want to taste this wisdom of God, recall the last time someone sat down and listened, really listened to you, not judging, just taking in your truth, your hurt. Remember the last time someone forgave you for your hurting them. Go! And do the same.