



Christ in Our Neighborhood

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prayer

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

In this reading, God doesn't ask us to be holy, he commands it: Observe what is right, do what is just! This sounds like a pretty tall order. But God commands us to be holy, not to be perfect or sinless. To be holy means that we openly receive the grace of God through the Sacraments, which help us to grow closer to Him through our daily thoughts and actions. To grow in holiness means striving unceasingly to conform our lives to His will through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It requires us to actively seek to determine what is right, and then do it!

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as His Bride, giving Himself up for her so as to sanctify her; He joined her to Himself as His body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God." (CCC 823)

As the Bride of Christ, with Christ as the head of our household, we are called to live out His teachings and follow the example that He set for us in the Gospels. Christ is the source of all holiness, and as members of His holy Church, we are called to lead others to holiness through our loving example.

The work may be hard, and it requires effort every minute of every day. But the reward promised in this reading is priceless: joy. Deep and healing joy that permeates every corner of your being, even in times of challenge or sadness. That's worth some effort!

Question

Think of someone who strikes you as holy. What traits, characteristics, or actions of that person demonstrate holiness to you?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 11:13—15, 29-32

The gifts and call of God are irrevocable for the Israelites as a nation. As members of the Church, we also have an irrevocable call to continue the mission of Christ. God does not break promises and does not alter His plans for us because of our sins and failures. Disobedience doesn't cancel the benefits of God's promises, but it could delay them as we stray farther from the path to holiness. Mercy is a gift we don't earn or deserve, a grace from our loving and forgiving God. Although we may stumble and lose our way, God's mercy is more powerful than our disobedience, and ultimately calls us back to the path to salvation.

St. Paul mentions that although he mainly ministers to the Gentiles, he hopes his work will cause jealousy for his own people (the Jews). How could jealousy help them? Imagine a young child with no interest in a toy until another child wants it. The first child suddenly wants nothing else. Paul hopes the Jews will be jealous of the Gentiles' new faith in Christ, and desire faith in Him as the Messiah themselves.

"All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness" (CCC 827). As we strive to find the path to holiness, we are blessed with beautiful examples in the lives of the saints. Christ's holiness shines forth through their example and lights the path to follow.

Question

When have you had a difficult time loving something about yourself? Did you try to change yourself or change the way you felt about that characteristic?

This is the second of a four-week series on the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

In the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies was where the blood sacrifice was offered. In the New Testament, the blood sacrifice was offered on the Cross, the new Holy of Holies. To be holy does not mean to simply avoid sin, it means to be at the holiest of places, at the foot of Christ's cross. To be out among the suffering people in our broken world, who Christ brought to salvation by sacrificing Himself.

In this week's Gospel, Jesus healed the Canaanite woman because she was suffering, and because she had complete faith in His ability to save her. We are called to holiness by following this example and ministering to all who suffer, no matter how difficult. "Charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it governs, shapes, and perfects all the means of sanctification." (CCC 826)

The lives of the saints are excellent models to follow to grow in holiness: St. Teresa of Calcutta's work with the poor; St. Elizabeth of Hungary's feeding of the hungry; St. Joseph's protection of Jesus and Mary; St. Paul's travels to spread the word of God; St. Francis of Assisi's tireless work to convert the hearts of the people; and St. Therese of Lisieux's "little way" which has led many to a life of holiness.

The Blessed Mother, greatest of all saints, is a perfect example of holiness and service. She stood by her son in complete faith through every blessing and challenge. She knew when to speak up (at the Wedding at Cana) and when to keep silent (at the foot of the cross) for Jesus' mission to be fulfilled through her service. Following Mary as a model of humility, service, and love is one of the surest paths to holiness.

Question

How does your church support the suffering? How could you participate and pour yourself out by doing God's work today?

This Week's Task

Spend five minutes each day this week reading about the life or teachings of a saint. Write down one idea from each saint to help you on your journey to holiness.

Group Prayer

The group prays the Magnificat of Mary Most Holy:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for He remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise He made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever. Amen

Continue with Psalm 67

Psalm

Response: O God, let all the nations praise you!

May God have pity on us and bless us;
may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth;
among all nations, your salvation.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the nations be glad and exult
because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on the earth you guide.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you!
May God bless us,
and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

Conclude with an Our Father