

Our readings today show 3 things we all need

The law, love and wisdom

The first reading is from Leviticus

The Book of the Law

St Paul tells us we are temples of the Holy Spirit

And how God's wisdom, dwelling our hearts

Will allow us to conquer the world

We do that through love

The love Christ speaks of in the Gospel

A love that goes beyond the law

It doesn't deny the law

It fulfills the law in ways that go beyond human wisdom

Leviticus calls us to *be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy*

And we are to apply it in love of neighbor

You shall love your neighbor as yourself

The problem with these laws was they allowed some wiggle room

The Pharisees set about defining who their neighbor was

They equated holiness with keeping the law

They felt no mercy for the lowly

For the orphan, the widow or the alien in their land

They fell again and again in their efforts to keep the law perfectly

So they made excuses for themselves

And created obstacles for others

They hearts were hardened

**So hard they didn't recognize the Christ when he walked
among them**

So Jesus comes and puts it in a bit of a different context

Instead of calling us to be holy

Jesus calls us to be perfect as our Father is perfect

But to be perfect is to be holy

It is to be like God himself

It is to be merciful

To all

Not just to our friends

Not only to those that love us

Tax collectors and pagans do these things

Just as the rain falls on the just and the unjust

And His sun rises on the bad and the good

We are to reach out to all

Even to our enemies

And that challenges us way down deep

Why?

Because we really don't like this or that person

They bug me

They have annoying habits

Objectively, they are living a life of sin

Whatever it may be

They have hurt me or a loved one

Sometimes, I can't even put a finger on why

But I just don't like this or that person

It happens to all of us, right?

It even happens to saints

St Theresa of Lisieux had a fellow sister in her convent

She had all kinds of annoying habits

They drove Therese and the other sisters crazy

But Theresa decided that she would love this sister

She was always kind to her

She prayed for her

She spoke with her and spent time with her

When St Theresa died, this sister was almost inconsolable

When some of the others asked her why

She replied: because my best friend has passed away

Theresa may not have liked this sister

But she loved her

And that love is our calling as well

That is being holy and perfect as our Father is

How do we follow Christ's words today?

Turn the other cheek?

Willingly go for two miles

When we are forced to go one mile

We see the law

An eye for an eye

A tooth for a tooth

Sacred Scripture says we can retaliate, right?

No, that is not what this means

A tooth for a tooth

If we are in an altercation

And we get a tooth knocked out

This means we can't seek to have the hand cut off

If our servant loses an eye in a fight

We can't demand both eyes of the other

This is a means of stopping the escalation of violence

But Christ calls us beyond that

He calls us to greater virtue

Sometimes it is better to be still

To become an instrument of peace

This goes beyond human wisdom

We need God's wisdom

To attain His wisdom, we need to be still at times

To let His wisdom fill our hearts

St Joseph is known for his wisdom

Yet, not one word of his is recorded in Sacred Scripture

We need this wisdom to know when to act

And when not to act

We are not called to pacifism

But we are not called to aggression either

But most of all

We need to pray for our persecutors

We need to love them

As Christ did, when being nailed to the cross

Forgive them Father, they know not what they do

So how do we become holy and perfect?

First, we recognize that we don't

There is not a formula out there

If I do this and this and that

I will become holy

Holiness is a gift that God bestows

That doesn't mean we do nothing

There are things we can do to help prepare our hearts for this gift

Like a farmer getting the fields ready for the seed

Cardinal Timothy Dolan has set out a basic plan

First is prayer

We need to have constant contact with the source of holiness

Next is faithfulness to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Receiving the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ

Worthily and as often as we can

At least weekly, more often if we can

Reading Sacred Scripture

Perhaps only a verse or two

But every day, opening our hearts to the Word of God

Letting these form us

Growing in virtue

Joining our prayers and devotions to Mary and the saints

We are not in this fight alone

And we don't have to battle alone

But they won't come to our aid if we don't ask

Lastly is desire for holiness

Consciously seeking it

This is our path to love our neighbor as our self

To holiness and perfection

To heaven itself