

**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**