

# SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Leviticus = lih-VIT-ih-kuhs

A short and potent reading that compresses into it the core of the Abrahamic faith.

Slight pause between "sin" and "because."

For meditation and context:

## LECTIONARY #79

READING I Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

### A reading from the Book of Leviticus

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."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13 (8a)

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

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
 and all my being, bless his holy name.  
 Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
 and forget not all his benefits.  
 He pardons all your iniquities,  
 heals all your ills.  
 He redeems your life from destruction,  
 crowns you with kindness and  
 compassion.

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.  
 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.

### READING I

The Book of Leviticus gives a legal framework for matters of ritual, society, and life. The law that undergirds the covenant between God and the people is based on an ethical understanding whereby the people are to act in a way that corresponds to God's actions. In today's passage from Leviticus, we hear of the call to holiness. Quite simply, because God is holy, all those bound to the covenant are called to be holy. The foundation of holiness for both God and the people is to give oneself for others. Such generative giving is demonstrated by

God in Genesis in the very desire to create something out of nothing. Therefore, an attitude of "otherness" must always guide the outlook of God's people.  
 The law proceeds to provide examples of how an attitude toward "otherness" is to be lived. First, one is prohibited from harboring any anger toward another. This flows into a second manifestation of "otherness," namely fraternal correction. Rather than harboring a grudge against another (which is sinful), one must reach out to correct others who may have committed some wrongdoing. Third, vengeance is not

to be tolerated, as it demonstrates a desire to hold a grudge against another. Finally, love is to be given to a neighbor according to the manner in which one wants to be loved. Besides the command to love God above all others, the instruction to love others is a capstone of the Israelite law. We can see this law of loving others as self as part of the foundation of the what is called the "golden rule" in Christianity and other religious and ethical traditions.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhns

Paul's focus in this reading is wisdom, specifically, its transcendent power. Take a forceful tone with this reading.

Slight pause between "one" and "deceive."

Apollos = uh-POL-uhs

Cephas = SEE-fuhs

The whole thrust of Paul's argument is felt in the shift from "you," to "Christ," to "God."

## READING II 1 Corinthians 3:16–23

### A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

#### 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**.

#### READING II

Three Pauline themes can be detected in today's reading from 1 Corinthians. The first is that the Christian community may be likened to "the temple of God." The one who inhabits this temple is God's very Spirit, which is why this temple is to be called holy. Paul is not simply talking about a holiness that comes from participation in worship, but a holiness that characterizes the very nature of the Christian community. Similar to Paul's reference to the Church as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15–20), this building imagery emphasizes unity. All members of

the community have a responsibility to maintain the temple's holiness through their actions.

This leads to a second Pauline theme, namely that such holiness is not to be found in human wisdom. Paul writes that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness," as he suggests that human wisdom leads individuals to self-reliance and therefore away from dependence upon God, who is the source of all wisdom. Paul tells the Corinthians that God is able to see how foolish the way of their human wisdom is, as he

quotes Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11—God sees both their behavior and their thoughts.

Finally, a third Pauline theme appears at the end of today's pericope which provides for the proper ordering of the community, namely that all belong to Christ. Because all belong to Christ, every member of the community has personal responsibility for the other members. Belonging to Christ means that relationship with God is fortified and unbreakable. Proper order within the "temple of God" exhibits true "holiness": care and concern for all relationships from God right on down to the

A powerful reading filled with familiar but perennially challenging teachings to take to heart. Proclaim as though these things are being said for the first time.

At this point, Jesus intensifies his teachings. Proclaim sincerely, tingeing your voice with surprise.

The questions that conclude this reading are not merely rhetorical. Imagine posing these questions to the members of your assembly.

GOSPEL Matthew 5:38-48

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

**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**.”

seemingly most insignificant member of the Church. Because all are one in Christ, thus, there is no cause for boasting of one’s own merits.

**GOSPEL** This week we continue to hear from the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus focuses on two basic Christian attitudes: acting with selflessness and loving one’s enemies. The taking of “an eye for an eye” is an often-quoted element of the Jewish law (for example, see Exodus 21:24), which was originally intended to keep the deliverance of retaliation in pro-

portion to the wrong committed. However, Jesus believes that a response in kind is not appropriate for the Christian disciple. Instead, the injured party must surrender pride and ego and take no retribution on the one who inflicts some sort of evil. This same selflessness is to guide Christian charity in general; one must go the extra mile in assisting those in need. By acting in such a way in all these circumstances, God’s love prevails over sin.

The second teaching involves developing a love for one’s enemies and not simply for one’s neighbors. Once again, Jesus

instructs his disciples to grasp the spirit of the ancient law. Love is meant to break down barriers of every sort. Thus, extending love to one’s neighbor ought to naturally lead a person to avoid the desire to judge others by turning them into enemies. In other words, friends and enemies must be treated alike. A disciple does not hold back love on account of human judgment, instead each follower is to strive for divine perfection, a perfection which bears no discrimination. S.W.