

February 27, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT

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BE HOLY

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's Reading

*The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell them: **Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy.***

"You shall not steal." You shall not lie or speak falsely to one another. You shall not swear falsely by my name, thus profaning the name of your God. I am the LORD.

"You shall not defraud or rob your neighbor. You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your day laborer. You shall not curse the deaf, or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am the LORD.

"You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your fellow men justly. You shall not go about spreading slander among your kin; nor shall you stand by

idly when your neighbor's life is at stake. I am the LORD.

“You shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. Though you may have to reprove him, do not incur sin because of him. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 11-18

Reflection

The first verse in Leviticus 19 strikes a deep note in me: I hear the desire of God for the chosen people to **be holy** because their God is holy. God was not only asking for the people to follow the many rules for conduct, dietary laws, festival rituals, family relations and every aspect of Jewish life. God also desired that the people know to whom they belong, that they may be in relationship with the Divine because the Holy One dwelt in their midst. The closeness of the divine Presence was meant to be absorbed into the people who would emulate the God of compassion and forgiveness. God's intention was made concrete in a covenant between God's self and the Hebrew people, an agreement binding the Holy One and humankind: *Be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy.*

When I was a child of about eight, I remember telling my father that I decided that I wasn't going to aim for heaven because I figured I wouldn't make it: I would aim for purgatory. My father looked at me with concern and answered, "What if you miss?" (In our religion class at school, we had been learning about the Christian tradition of heaven, purgatory, and hell.) My father's solemn answer gave me pause and made me reconsider my childhood decision. We had learned that only the holiest, most saintly people would be brought to heaven when they died, and I did not imagine how I could be in that select group!

And yet, in today's reading from Leviticus, taken from the "Holiness Collection," we hear that God desired the chosen people to **be holy for their God is holy**. Holiness is a divine quality to be shared. How are they, and we who follow the Judeo-Christian tradition, to become holy? The following verses (11-18) describe our responsibility to do justice and practice charity in all our dealings. The culmination is clear in the final verse, *"You shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart...take no revenge and cherish no grudge against any of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself.**"*

Jesus quoted this verse when he was questioned by the scribe, “Which commandment is first of all?” Jesus responded, “The first is this, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mark 12:28-31).



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For Pondering and Prayer

The law of charity says that the way we love ourselves is the way we love each other. God asks of us a wholeness of love: love of God and love of our neighbor as we love ourselves. Loving your neighbor means loving your whole being, your body, mind, spirit, all creatures, our mother earth and the totality of God’s creation. This is the way for us to be holy because our God is holy.

As the One who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

1Peter 1:15 and Leviticus 19:2

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