

## Homily – Saint Luke Church

February 23, 2020

The Scriptures powerfully challenge us today -- to be holy because God is holy – and perfect because our heavenly Father is perfect. Immediately we raise an objection: We are not God! How can we be like God? Do not problems emerge when we think we are God, without need for God in our lives? So, are we being asked to do something impossible? Would the Lord ask us this of us?

The answer comes with understanding the biblical concepts of holiness and perfection as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Holiness in the Bible means that God is totally **other than, different from,** anything – or anyone -- we can imagine. God's ways are not those of the world! Our society – sometimes our very families – are torn by anger, hatred, vengeance. We can also wall ourselves off from those who are different from us, not recognizing that every one – without exception – is a child of God, and, so, a sister and brother to us.

We are created in God's own image. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus echoes the Book of Leviticus. His disciples are not to hold grudges and seek revenge for a real or imagined injury.

We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. That is what holiness or perfection means – loving and caring for others as God does. To be a child of God or a disciple of Jesus means to share in the divine nature by reflecting God’s unconditional love for all – in what we say and do every day.

When Jesus says we are to love our enemies, he is not telling us to avoid righteous anger when we see injustices being committed. We are not to condone evil, to think that lying is okay, that bullying others is acceptable behavior. However, we are not to sin in our opposing evil or chastising such behavior. God has the exclusive right to vengeance. God will judge us all at the end of the world by how we cared for one another, especially the most needy and vulnerable among us.

St. Paul reminds us that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells within us, giving us wisdom and courage, empowering us to be true missionary disciples of the risen Lord. Yes, we are to strive for holiness and perfection – seeing others as God sees them – through the eyes of faith – and reaching out to them with God’s unconditional love and tender care. Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us to be authentic disciples of your beloved Son!