

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 23, 2020

“Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)

The English language can be a very hard to master for a non-English speaking person. We have words which sound the same, but are spelled differently and convey separate meanings. An excellent example are the words “holy” and “wholly.” If we were to replace the word “holy” found in Leviticus with “wholly,” would this declaration of God change in meaning and could this change offer us a more complete understanding of what God intended?

To answer these questions, let us first begin by defining the word wholly. To be whole is to be completely filled; to lack nothing. We would rightly say that only God is completely whole, completely filled, lacking in nothing. As Catholics, we have been taught this fact from a very early age. We have repeated the lines: “God is all good, all knowing, infinitely perfect, complete within Himself.” And, as Catholics, we have also been taught that we are the ones who are not complete, lacking, wounded, and various other statements.

As I considered these last statements, I found myself questioning how I could become whole as God is whole. To do this in an honest way, I had to reexamine the statement: “I am in need.” Do I honestly believe that I am in need or have I become so programed with this response that it hides my spiritual complacency? Sometimes, we respond with the correct answer without reflecting upon the significance of the answer. If we consider our daily needs, I think most would first assume we are speaking of material needs. I also think most would be satisfied, for the most part. We have a roof over our heads. Our bellies are full. We have experienced the love of a family. We are free or have been free, due to physical health, to experience various things like work or travel. No one is persecuting or martyring us for being Christian. Yes, we could always have a little more money in our pockets, a nicer automobile, a more ideal house for our current situation, our health could always be better, but, again, for the most part we are satisfied. Are we really in need?

To answer this question, I first had to admit that my words today will have little effect upon any of you or even myself. Words can inspire change. They can motivate us to change, but we will not begin to address this need without first allowing the Holy Spirit the freedom to enlighten us of our incompleteness. Again, I can say I am not perfect, how often have I said this in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but without a sincere and humble acknowledgment that I need the Holy Spirit’s guidance, these too are just words which will be repeated in my next confession.

Let me conclude by posing to all of us some questions which were inspired after reading page 15 of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Member Handbook. (1) Has my spiritual life become something I do or is it something I am? (2) Have I allowed the movement of society to affect me or have I, guided by the Holy Spirit, sought to affect my society? (3) Have I allowed my suffering to hinder or stop my spiritual growth or have I have rather allowed my spiritual life to flourish through my suffering? Finally, (4) have I allowed my spiritual life to become a mere participant in my everyday life or do I allow my spiritual life to guide me as I cope with my everyday life? I can only pose the questions. The Holy Spirit has to be the one who helps us reach our answers.