

## GOSPEL

*Matthew 5:38-48*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

## HOMILY OF POPE ST JOHN PAUL II

*(Translated from Italian, Excerpt)*

*18 February 1990*

"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect "  
(Mt 5:48).

1. The Sermon on the Mount, a true "code of perfection" for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, reaches in these words - dear brothers and sisters - its summit and its highest and most demanding synthesis. What is its meaning and what are the implications for life?

Jesus asks his followers, who intend to live according to the law of the new covenant, to realize in their way of thinking and behaving that perfection which has its foundation and model in the holiness of the heavenly Father.

God is holy, because "he is good and great in love": in fact, he has shown himself in the whole history of salvation. Infinitely superior to man, he entered into human life and became God "with" men and "for"

men: he spoke and performed marvelous deeds, to free them from every form of slavery and make them "his" people through the alliance. As the responsorial psalm reminded us, God is holy because he forgives the sins of men, heals them from every disease, saves their life from the pit, crowns them with grace and mercy.

2. The full and definitive revelation of divine holiness is Jesus Christ, "the only saint", on whom the Spirit of holiness rested; he who with his word and life has become a teacher and model, source and goal of all perfection. Ascended, after his death and resurrection, to the right hand of the Father, Jesus poured out and continues to pour out on all those who believe in him and form his Church the Spirit of holiness which makes them "one" in him, enriches them with multiple gifts, moves them inwardly to love God with all their hearts and to love each other as brothers. In a word: he makes them "saints".

Holiness, therefore, is above all a gift, which makes us partakers of the very life of God, through Christ, in the communion of the Spirit. Thus we become branches of the true vine which is Christ, living temples of God, abodes of the Spirit. It is a gift that must not be wasted, but welcomed and lived with joyful awareness, "blessing" the Lord with gratitude, as we do in every celebration of the Eucharist.

3. Christian holiness, however, besides being a gift, is for Christ's disciples a task to be fulfilled in everyday life, a vocation to which to give a concrete response. A vocation that challenges everyone without distinction, even if it can take different forms and ask someone for more radical commitments of service to God and to the brothers.

The Second Vatican Council, especially in the constitution *Lumen gentium* (n. 39), wrote beautiful and very stimulating pages on this topic: "Everyone in the Church - he recalled - is called to holiness, according to the Apostle's saying: Certainly the will this is God's, that you sanctify yourselves. Now this holiness in the Church is manifested and must be manifested in the fruits of the grace that the Spirit produces in the faithful".

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



**Head:** Pope St John Paul II tells us that “God is holy, because ‘he is good and great in love’”. What is your understanding of holiness?



**Heart:** Jesus makes us “saints”. How do you feel about this concept?



**Hands:** Holiness is both a gift and a task we must undertake. What are some concrete ways we can grow in holiness, given that holiness is being “good and great in love”?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.