



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

GROWING IN HOLINESS

Fr. Jojo Letada, Guest Priest
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Mathew5: 43-48

“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 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Be holy as your heavenly Father is holy.”

The Season of Lent invites us to grow in holiness. It is like a seed that needs to be buried before it grows, to be nourished to mature, grow and bear fruits for the harvest. Moreover, it is a journey that we have travelled many times. The first step begins with ourselves, but it always ends with others. There are people we meet going in different directions; some maybe going in the same direction as ours. But it is always the same destination: the empty tomb that makes all our efforts worthwhile and meaningful.

As we grow in holiness, we begin a conversation that opens our minds, hearts and souls with others. Through shared stories, we find the courage to look within ourselves, to dig deep into our desire for wholeness/holiness and put forth the effort that holiness embodies: healing of self and others.

Indeed we have made this journey many times before, but this Lent, who will we meet? Whose story will we share? How will we respond along the way? Let us remember the Lord lets the sun shine to everyone, sinners or saints.

What are our fears in living a holy life? Pope Francis and Saint Pope John Paul II re-echoe the words of Jesus, “**Do not be afraid!**” Do not be afraid to aim high to be loved and be purified by God. Do not be

afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit, every day as we grow in holiness. Let us allow the Great Potter, our Lord and Savior to mold us.

Growing in holiness or kadosh in Hebrew means to be **perfect** or to separate oneself from the profane.

The chalice is similar to a cup. But why is the chalice a holy cup? Because it is separated from the other cups.

For the Jewish people, Holiness is

- Faithfulness to the covenant by following the law.

Jesus denounced the way of holiness of the Scribes and Pharisees because their holiness was centered so much on the strict interpretation of the law, hypocrisy and arrogance. They didn't practice what they preached.

THREE WAYS TO A HOLY LIFE of Jewish People

1. **Prayer.** God invites us to commune with Him every day. We get to know more about His Truth that “I am Your Father and you are my child.” We are heirs of His Kingdom.
2. **Almsgiving.** Sets us free from thinking negatively about our brothers and sisters.
 - It is being generous and charitable by seeing more of the good things that others say and do, rather than the mistakes and failings.
 - All that I have is not I mine to keep but all mine to share. It means charity.
 - It is a change of mind leading to a compassionate heart that makes our hands share and feet walk to help the poor and the needy.
3. **Fasting** is depriving ourselves of anything that is pleasurable. It is allowing us to experience the hunger of others.
 - We can only feel compassion with other people as we also encounter hunger and

emptiness. We get in touch with our own poverty.

Five Demons We Should STOP right now if we want to GROW IN HOLINESS

1. **Being lazy is a distortion of priorities.** We have mis-prioritized God.
2. **Complaining** is a form of mis-action. It highlights the negative aspect / weaknesses of a person, in a group, in a family, in the community, in the church and in the nation.
3. **Striving for Perfection.** Doesn't want to make mistakes or doesn't see one's mistakes.
 - Striving for perfection is demoralizing.
 - As a human beings, we are imperfect, limited and in need of a perfect Savior.
 - God will show us our true value as an amazing human being.
 - Our perfection is not coming from our own doing but from God our Creator.
 - We are perfect because of God.
4. **Blindly believing.** There are three important elements of faith:
 - Faith trusting
 - Faith in action: Hands and feet that move in faith.
 - Head receives truth, faith conviction that leads to trust in God, pass through the hands and feet and live out the faith.
 - **Expecting God to do it our way** is a temptation.

How to Combat

- a. Thank God for the gifts.
- b. Let go of our previous expectations.
- c. Ask grace how to respond to everything.
- d. Trust in Him.

EIGHT THINGS WE MUST DO TO GROW IN HOLINESS

1. **Honesty.** We can't deceive God. God is Truth. We must be true to Him, to others and to our self.
2. **Obedience.** Our food is to do the will of the One who sent us by being what God wants us to be.
3. **Love is holiness** for Jesus, loving God and our neighbor.
4. **Integrity** for Jesus is consistency in our words and actions. John 13:35 states: "By

this, they may know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. " *Dabar* means word plus action.

5. **No to Sin.** Do not simply avoid sin. Know the sins and say NO to sin.
6. **Engage.** Commitment to God is doing what God wants us to do with love and faithfulness. When God gives you a responsibility or a ministry, be thankful for God is *involved* with us.
7. **Service.** Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant. So the Son of man did not come to be served, but to give His life as a ransom for many'. The only consolation of service is sacrifice, an offering of one's life.
8. **Solidarity.** Jesus shows solidarity with the poor and the needy, a path that leads us to encounter God.
 - Closing our door to the needy blinds us to God.

ALL CHRISTIANS IN ANY STATE OR WALK OF LIFE ARE CALLED TO THE FULLNESS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND TO THE PERFECTION OF LOVE. ALL FORMS AND TASKS OF LIFE ARE MANY BUT HOLINESS IS ONE, THAT SANCTITY IS CULTIVATED BY ALL WHO ACT UNDER GOD'S SPIRIT, OBEYING THE FATHER'S VOICE, AND ADORING THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH, FOLLOW CHRIST, POOR, HUMBLE AND CROSS-BEARING, THAT THEY MAY DESERVE TO BE PARTAKERS OF HIS GLORY.

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Holiness is a universal call.

For JESUS, to be HOLY or PERFECT is to LOVE as HE and GOD OUR FATHER LOVED US

Let us pray that we continue to allow our Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to love us, to teach and to mold our hearts and mind like theirs, so that we may grow in holiness, just us we are called to be.

Transcriber/Writer: Sis. Irene L.Cruz

Editor: Sis. Maria Vera I. Tuplano

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