

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters

**DO
MORE
OF
WHAT
MAKES
YOU
~~HAPPY~~
HOLY**

The Lord spoke to Moses, “Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.” Leviticus 19, 1

My second assignment as a priest was to the parish of St. Mary’s in Plainfield. Across the road from the church is a red brick building, the Convent of the Missionaries of Charity, and this one is a Novitiate for the Contemplative Branch of the sisters of Mother Teresa. Each Monday I would go to celebrate Mass with the sisters, and this particular Monday was no different.

What was different was the greeting I got at the door that morning. I was used to ringing the door bell and then having one of the sisters, in her blue and white sari, greet me with a broad smile, opening the door and welcoming me in, thanking me profusely for having come to celebrate Mass. But this day I rang and the door was opened by a sister I did not know. She looked at me with dark brown eyes and simply said: “Be Holy!” She then turned and walked away towards the chapel.

I was left standing at the door, taken aback, wondering what she meant. As I walked to the chapel, then vested for Mass, and then celebrated the Mass, her words kept coming back to me; during the readings, the homily, the consecration, and Communion.

What did she mean? Be holy? At first, I thought ‘How rude, is that any way to greet someone at the door, especially me, who’s coming here to do Mass for them?’

Then I thought, ‘What does she know about me anyway? We’ve never met before; she must be having a bad day. Does she think I am not holy? Just by looking at me?’

Whichever way I looked at it, I found myself offended and defensive.

The more I thought about it, the more challenged I felt. But the more I thought about it, the more her words made sense, and the clearer it became that she was right. I did not need to know her motive or reasoning, all I had to do was accept what she said: “Be Holy.” Why should she not greet me in this way? The Lord says the same thing to his people today in the first reading of this Sunday’s Mass: “Be Holy.”

The fact that I was offended and taken aback spoke more about me than her. If I had been holy, I would be happy to hear her greeting. But she had caught me out, not only was I not holy (evidenced by my offense) but I was upset at the invitation. If I was not holy why should I not accept the invitation to be so?

What does it mean to be holy anyway? Today’s reading today gives us some suggestions:

Do not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart.

Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against anyone.

Offer no resistance to one who is evil.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

These are some ways to be holy. But there are many others. Each one of us will receive this invitation in today’s liturgy.

If we feel uncomfortable, if we feel challenged, if we feel ‘outed’.....Good! Then, and only then, can we accept the invitation to be who we were created to be. That being the case, the greeting “Be Holy” is as good as any.