

## SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

### PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God, our Protector,  
it is so much easier  
to love only those  
who love us in return.  
Teach us to be like your Son,  
who loved and forgave those  
who nailed him to the cross.  
We pray this prayer  
through that same Jesus,  
who lives with you,  
forever and ever.

### FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The focus of our readings is to love as God loves. Because our society tends to trivialize the word "love," we are apt to miss the profound nature of this teaching in our two readings. The motivation for this commandment in *Leviticus* is the holiness of God. Precisely because God is holy, God's people must be holy, and that holiness is reflected in love of neighbor. Jesus takes the commandment further and adds a positive requirement to it—"Love your enemies and pray for them." But the motivation and conclusion are the same—we must be loving and kind because God is loving and kind.

*Note on the adaptation of the Gospel: We have shortened and simplified the text so that children can more easily take its message to heart—to love those whom you don't like, even those who hurt you.*

FIRST READING: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18*

*This is a reading from the book of Leviticus.*

God said to Moses,

"Gather the whole community of Israel together and say to them,

'You must be holy,  
because I am your God,  
and I am holy.

You must not hate your brothers  
and sisters in your heart.

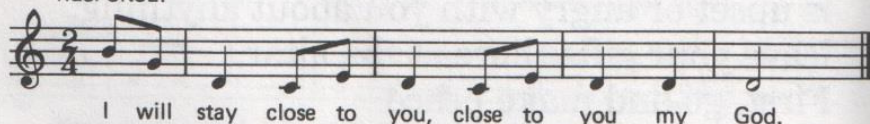
Tell them when they do something wrong,  
but don't try to get even with people,  
and don't stay angry with them.

You must love your neighbor  
as you love yourself.' "

*The Word of the Lord.*

### RESPONSE: *Psalm 73*

RESPONSE:




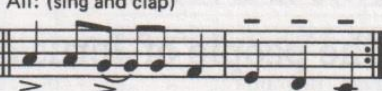
VERSES:



- |         |     |       |   |      |       |       |       |      |
|---------|-----|-------|---|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. When | I'm | feel  | - | ing  | _____ | an    | -     | gry. |
| 2. When | I'm | feel  | - | ing  | _____ | hurt. | _____ |      |
| 3. When | I   | don't |   | un   | - der | stand |       | you. |
| 4. When | I   | can't |   | go   | _____ | on.   | _____ |      |
| 5. You  | are | al    | - | ways | _____ | with  |       | me.  |
| 6. As   | you | guide |   | my   | _____ | way.  | _____ |      |
| 7. Hold | me, | keep  |   | me   | _____ | safe. | _____ |      |



## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Leader:  All: (sing and clap) 

1. Love — God with all your heart: } Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!  
2. Love your neigh-bor as your - self: }

## GOSPEL: *Matthew 5:43-48*

*This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Jesus said to his disciples,

“You have heard people say,

‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

“But I say to you,

love your enemies and pray for people  
who are unkind to you  
and who say bad things about you.

Then you will be true children of God,  
for God lets the sun shine  
on both good and bad people.

If you love only people who love you,  
why should you be rewarded?

Even sinners do that!

If you are friendly only to people you like,  
you are no better than anyone else.

Even people who don't know God do that.

You must be kind and loving just like God.”

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

We are accustomed to reflecting on love of neighbor. But today's Gospel calls us to reflect on loving our enemies. Children often have a keen sense of fairness. That quality, positive enough, will also make it difficult to speak about loving those who hurt us. Gently lead the children to see that this is precisely what Jesus asks. It is easy to love those who love us, to be friendly to people who like us. But God accepts everyone and wants us to do the same.

Encourage the children to discuss the difficulties of loving people they don't like. They will likely be able to provide many examples. We can help children develop a biblical conscience in their early years. They should see commandments such as, “*You must be holy*, because I, your God, am holy”; and “*You must be kind and loving just like God*,” as ideals. It is always a delicate ministry to challenge children with the truth of the Gospel while avoiding moralizing or instilling guilt. Every day we *try* to be more like Jesus.

Our holiness consists in being *like* God in the sense that we are striving to live God's commandment because that is *God's way* of living.

