

See and Respond to Human Need First Week of Lent Monday, March 6, 2017
8:15 AM **Lv 19:1-2, 11-18; Mt 25:31-46** (And that is living the life of God, which God is always inviting us into. And that is the beginning of eternal life.)

Today we are reading from two sources: the Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Leviticus. What is most remarkable is that the content of both are very similar. **The Book of Leviticus** is not a book of silly laws or rules. It's **a very practical way of living out this commandment that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself."** That's how this ends.

Jesus capitalized on this in his teaching. In this way he is totally consistent with the whole of the Torah. But there is a slight difference because in the gospel, in the very beginning of the gospel it says, **"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him."** That's really key. **For the Jews the Torah was for them.** They were obliged to live by the Torah and they would be judged by the Torah, but not the nations. The nations weren't part of their way of life. **They by and large looked at them as incapable of living a good life, with a few exceptions.**

Here the gospels do not look at the nations as incapable of living a good life, a holy life. And this is a matter of holiness that the whole Book of Leviticus begins. **"I, the Lord, am holy, therefore you shall be holy."** **But here the gospel implies that all people can be holy if only they acknowledge the holiness of God residing in the needy.** Mind you, this is not a matter of faith, per se, as we usually use the word faith. It's a matter of **perceiving God in human beings and following up that perception with an action that supplies human beings with what they need.** And the implication is very clear that everyone can really enter into the kingdom of heaven if only they are open, open-minded, open-hearted, and live according to the light that God gives them. This is a far cry from saying that people have to believe in Jesus to be saved. This is not in this gospel; in fact, it's not in any gospel. That is not a Christian belief actually that one has to believe in Jesus to be saved. No, never says that anywhere. **What it says is that you have to see Jesus in your neighbor, in your enemy, and respond to that neighbor's or that enemy's need.** And that is living the life of God, which God is always inviting us into. And that is the beginning of eternal life.