

## BECOME ALL GOD CREATED YOU TO BE

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**D**id it ever strike you that we live in a society so different from that of the people Jesus spoke with? He lived in a theocracy with a common faith, a strong moral sense rooted in God’s Word, an awareness that all of its members, together, were a chosen people, God’s chosen people. In spite of all those gifts, evil still seeped into their lives.

Today we live in a democracy founded on solid values – freedom of speech, freedom of religion, liberty, and justice for all. We value our freedoms. We work hard to provide for our families and promote quality education for our children. We take pride in the achievements of Americans in sports, science, and technology. Still, with all that is good, we cannot deny that evil has seeped into the fabric of our society. We live in a secularized age where religious faith and practice have waned dramatically over the years. Technology has been a mixed blessing. Abuse of means of instant communication at times spreads messages that are divisive or blatantly destructive and untrue. Relativism seems to have invaded our moral sense. TV and the movie industry earn billions producing shows filled with violence, guns, and unbridled sex. Yes, our democracy values freedom and justice for all, yet often, freedom becomes license; and in fact, justice is not always the same for all. The news of the day tells us that these evils affect our neighborhoods, family life, schools, churches, our nation. Many people feel overwhelmed, but what can we do?



Jesus is very direct on the question. Speaking to his disciples and the crowds, he reproaches the scribes and Pharisees who are in positions of authority but do not practice what they preach. He berates their oppression, the burdens they lay on people, their vanity, their desire for positions of honor and public recognition. By way of contrast, Jesus urges his disciples to be counter-cultural. *Observe what your teachers tell you, but do not follow their example.* He adds, *Remember, you have but one Father. . . the greatest among you must be your servant* (Matt.23, 3, 9, 11). The love of God which fills his followers is to be poured out in the service of others. That is true greatness.

Today’s readings are an urgent call to examine our lives so that we can become the persons God created us to be. Yes, we have our weaknesses, our sins. We also have great gifts from God - grace, faith, hope and the capacity to love God and neighbor. Plus, each of us has personal talents to contribute to the mission Jesus entrusts to us, to spread the reign of God on earth.

Pope Francis in his letter ***The Joy of the Gospel*** states that every Catholic is called to be a missionary disciple. Learn how to recognize God’s presence around you. Open your hearts, let the Spirit of Christ work within you, through you. What talents do you have to contribute? What pitfalls must you learn to avoid?

Who among us will step up to the plate and face today’s challenges so that others may experience the values of the Kingdom of God present and at work in our times? Don’t miss the opportunity. Reach out to others in loving support and compassionate service.

