**Lenten reflection #3**

Scripture readings for today: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119; Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus falls under the weight of the crossMost people cringe when they hear Matthew 5:48: “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” How is this possible? Isn’t perfection reserved for God alone?

The word perfect in the Bible can also mean “mature” or “complete.” When the book of Hebrews says that “Jesus was made perfect through suffering,” it is saying that, in His humanity, Jesus’ love grew through the hardships He endured.

Secondly, Jesus has just finished speaking about loving our enemies. Perfection, in this sense, means that we seek to obtain the same expansiveness as Christ in defining our neighbor.

Finally, it’s helpful to look at similar Scripture passages. 1 Peter 1:15 says, “As He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct.” And St. Paul states in Ephesians 5:1-2, “Be imitators of God and live in love, as Christ loved us.”

These verses impress on us to have the same attitude as God. We are not directed to imitate God in perfection but in forgiving and in loving others as Christ has loved us.