

Homily of 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A

By the half-time of the Super Bowl last weekend, many people thought that the Falcons were going to win. I learned the following lessons from the dramatic come back of the Patriots: Do not give up. Do not lose confidence. Do not lose hope. Do not lose courage. On the Falcons side, I learnt the following: Do not be overconfident. Do not lose concentration. Do not presume.

The Super Bowl reminds me of 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 which says that the children of the world put so much effort to compete for perishable crown. The footballers, the musicians, the stadium; everything was done with precise perfection and beauty. Every participant gave their best. The spectators were enthusiastic. They have a lot to teach us who are running for imperishable crown. I need to ask myself, especially with regards to my faith as a Catholic Christian, "What is the level of my passion and commitment?"

The readings today are filled with symbols. I will attempt to give some interpretations: The first reading says, "[God] has set before you fire and water; to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him." A way of interpreting this statement is that all our choices and actions have their responsibilities and consequences. Bad choices and actions have bad responsibilities and consequences, while good choices and actions have good responsibilities and consequences. This is in line with the natural law of cause and effect. We pray that we will cooperate with the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to make choices that are for our good and for God's glory.

However, we need to acknowledge that there are times we are not free to choose. Nature sometimes decides for us. Men and women sometimes decide for us. God sometimes decides for us. These are the times; we rely on God's divine providence. We also pray for God's intervention at the times choices are made for us without our consent. This is why it is important to constantly surrender to God in prayers and keep ourselves in his presence.

The Gospel of today reminds me of when a government or a country or an organization decides to amend sections of its constitutions for a better understanding and a better implementation of the sections. The amendment Jesus made in the Old Testament Commandment is that we do not pass by the cause of a problem while try to eliminate the effects. It is bad medication to treat symptoms and effects while the cause of the illness is disregarded. To address the cause of a headache is better than taking pills to ease the ache. To address the cause of anxiety is better than taking sedatives and tranquilizers as treatment.

Therefore, Jesus is saying that it is anger that leads to murder. If there is control over anger, there will be control over murder. If there is control over anger, there will be control over insulting and rejecting others. If there is control over anger, reconciliation will be easier.

Jesus is also saying that it is lust that leads to adultery. If there is control over lust, adultery and other sexual sins will also be under control. If infidelity is controlled, the rate of divorce will be low.

Jesus says, tear out your right eye, and cut of your right hand that cause you to sin so that you do not have your whole body go into hell. Jesus is saying, have the courage to separate oneself from whatever or whoever that can lead a person astray or can bring destruction, no matter the closeness, or the commitment, or the attachment.

Lastly, we cannot eliminate swearing in ceremonies, and taking of vows and oaths. They are part and parcel of almost every culture. Jesus is saying that swearing in ceremonies, taking of vows and oaths are not as important as 'Yes' being 'Yes' and 'No' being 'No.' Swearing in ceremonies or taking of vow or oath are useless where 'Yes' is not 'Yes' and 'No' is not 'No.' The spiritual level of 'Yes' is 'Yes' and 'No' is 'No' is the optimum level all us are aspiring to reach. May God help us to attain it.

Amen.