

Homily of Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

Sirach 27:4-7; Psalm 92:2-3, 13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; Luke 6:39-45

The first and second readings have words of encouragement for us. The first reading says, "As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace, so in tribulation is the test of the just." In the second reading St. Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. Jesus says, "Blessed is the one who does not lose faith in me" (Luke 7:21). Those who hold onto God, blessings come after tribulations.

This is the last Sunday before Lent. The readings invite us to proceed into the Lenten season with a contrite heart. The heart is described as the center of vitality of our spiritual and physical body. What is stored in the heart pilots our spiritual and physical behavior. The first reading says, "The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had; so too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind" (Sirach 27:6). Jesus says in today's gospel, "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of store of evil produces evil; from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). Therefore, what we feed the heart with and what we store in our heart matters. What we feed our heart with and what we store in our heart reflect not only in what our mouth speaks but also in our behavior. That is why St. Paul instructs us to fill our hearts with whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

Whereby a person who feeds his or her heart with dirty, filthy, violent, fake, false, and ungodly materials, reflects in the person's behavior. Whatever is stored in the heart either sanctifies or defiles the soul and the body. Whatever occupies the depth of a person's heart is what the person projects outside of himself or herself. It is what we have that we give. As quoted earlier, "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of the store of evil produces evil; from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

In the Gospel Jesus tells us, "Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye, when you do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?'" By this statement, Jesus invites us to look inward ourselves more than the attention we pay on the faults and sins of others. We should rather become our own accusers (Proverb 18:17), rather than accusers of our brothers and sisters (Revelation 12:10). An African adage says, "When we point one accusing finger at someone, the other fingers point at us and accuse us." St. Paul cautions us, "Therefore, you are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment. For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things" (Romans 2:1). Last Sunday, Jesus instructed us, "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned" (Luke 6:37).

An ancient Greek saying advises, "Man [woman], know thyself." Self-knowledge helps us to recognize and acknowledge God's grace in our life and be able to have more understanding of others, show empathy to them, and be less judgmental to them. A religious man who saw a man being led to the gallows wept in empathy, "There but for the grace of God, go I." Does this religious man's expression challenge us about how we perceive and judge others?

May the Spirit of God lead us through a fruitful Lenten season. We pray:

"Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed; recreate in us your own Spirit, Lord!"

Amen.

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