

## Homily of Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

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

The first reading and the gospel bring to my mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:11, 18-19, “It is not what enters one’s mouth that defiles that person; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one ... But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy.” This is why Psalm 51:12 prays, “A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit.”

Chickens incubate their eggs by sitting on them to keep them warm and turning them regularly. This process is called brooding. After a period of time, the eggs hatch into chicks. This process happens to us concerning unresolved evil thoughts stored in our hearts. They are only brooding and will surely come out of our mouth or manifest in our attitude sometime, somewhere. Sometimes, they come out or manifest in a surprising or even embarrassing manner.

This is why the first reading warns us, “When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear, so do one’s fault when one speaks.... 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 27:4 & 6). 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 behaviors. Therefore, what we feed our hearts with and what we store in our hearts reflect not only in what our mouth speaks but also in our behaviors. Whereby a person feeds his or her heart with dirty, filthy, violent, fake, false, and ungodly materials, these vices do reflect in the person’s communication and 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).

Whatever is stored in the heart either sanctifies or defiles the soul and the body. It is what we have that we give. In today’s gospel, Jesus says, “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). Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). What would Jesus say about the impure of heart?

Jesus invites us to another act of inward-looking. He says, “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?’” This statement does not mean that we do not speak the truth, or do not correct one another, or do not encourage one another to do the right thing, rather, by this statement, Jesus invites us to look inward ourselves more than paying so much attention and being overly critical of other persons’ faults, wrongs, and sins. Jesus instructed us last Sunday to stop judging and to stop condemning (Luke 6:37). St. Paul adds, “For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things” (Romans 2:1). This is the sin of hypocrisy; Jesus cautions us about. We often say, “When a person points one accusing finger at someone, the other fingers point at the accuser.”

Socrates says, “To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.” Self-knowledge helps us to recognize and acknowledge God’s grace in our life and be able to understand others more, show empathy, and be less judgmental to them. St. Paul advises us, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). A political prisoner, John Bradford, while witnessing a public execution in the Tower of London around 1553, is attributed to have said, “There but for the grace of God, go I.” Does this remark challenge us concerning how we perceive and judge others?

Finally, instead of concentrating our attention on the faults, wrongs, and sins of others, St. Paul advises us in the second reading, “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” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Yes, indeed, our fault finding and being critical of others neither help us nor anyone else. Rather, spending our time fully devoted to the work of the Lord can never be in vain.

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