

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A man and his wife, now in their 60's, were celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. On their special day a good fairy came to them and said that because they had been such a devoted couple, she would grant each of them a very special wish.

The wife wished for a trip around the world with her husband.

Whoosh! Immediately she had airline/cruise tickets in her hands.

The man wished for a female companion 30 years younger...

Whoosh...immediately he turned ninety!!!

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of the ordinary time before Lent, today's readings would be a good start to prepare our Lent to dive deep into our lives. Both the first reading and the Gospel invites us to reflect on the integrity of our words and actions.

In the first reading, Book of Sirach brings these images from our daily life to illustrate how a person's true character is revealed over time:

- A sieve lets fine flour pass through while leaving the refuse behind.
- A potter's vessel is tested in the furnace of fire.
- A tree is known by its fruit.
- One's speech reveals their heart.

These images challenge us to examine our words and actions because they reveal the true condition of our hearts.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us three important teachings:

- The Blind Leading the Blind: We must first open our own eyes before guiding others.
- The Plank in the Eye: Before correcting others, we must remove the "plank" from our own eyes.
- The Good and Bad Tree: Just as a tree is known by its fruit, a person is known by their words and deeds.

Jesus does not claim that there are people who are either naturally 'good' or naturally 'evil'. On the contrary, his diagnosis of why we become hypocrites or false guides is simply blindness. The wooden beam blocks us from seeing clearly, so we start pointing fingers at others, searching like a blindfolded child playing the old party game pin the tail on the donkey. As an adult game, stabbing others in the dark demonstrates a lack of charity and compassion. Ironically, we disclose to others the emptiness of our hearts and childish

behavior. Jesus says in our Gospel that we have “wooden beams” in our eyes when we relate to others. Maybe we must close our eyes for a while in order to see around these. We should stop projecting on others our own blockages, and work on the much larger wooden beams in our own psyche instead. This seems to me a quite sound psychological insight.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “There is someone I love, even though I don’t approve of what he does. There is someone I accept, though some of his thoughts and actions revolt me. There is someone I forgive, though he hurts the people I love the most. That person is me.”

Jesus asks us to do a deep self-examination with a sincere heart to know our integrity and help others. It is like a mask you put on in the airplane, before you help someone.

This is a good start for our Lent to spend some time with Jesus to evaluate how you look at others and also to honestly look at ourselves and see our shortcoming. Lent is a wonderful opportunity to slow down, evaluate our lives, seek reconciliation so that we can bear good fruits in our lives.