

8th Sunday In Ordinary Time. Readings; Sir 27:4-7, 1 Cor 15:54-58 & Lk 6:39-45 (Year C)

Theme: "CAN A BLIND PERSON GUIDE A BLIND PERSON?"

With the celebration of the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we have come to the end of Ordinary Time season. This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, March 5, the beginning of Lenten Season, our 40-day journey with the Lord in the desert. Our second reading today, taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, is one of the readings we use for funeral Masses. Death is one of the realities of life that we often do not talk about. We do know that one of the fundamental truths of life is that once you are born, you will certainly die one day. St. Paul describes death as a scorpion with a sting, sin by which it injects its poison to us. He reminds us, Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, has gained victory over death. He is not so much talking about physical death but spiritual death. For us Christians, through our faith in Jesus Christ, Paul assured us not to be afraid of death, because death has no final victory over us. If he, Jesus, has been raised from death, then through God's grace and our faith in eternal life, Jesus will raise our mortal bodies to be with him in heaven.

How then, are we preparing for death when it comes to us one day? Many of us, if not all of us, have made pre-funeral arrangements with our favorite funeral home and our parish. Great things to do. If you have not done so, please, I humbly encourage you to do so. It eases/relieves some of the pains/worries your loved ones will have with your death. It also helps your family to honor your wishes for your funeral Mass. Let us also not forget about spiritual preparations which the readings of today call our attention to.

The first reading is taken from the Book of Sirach. Just a brief explanation of this book. The Book of Sirach is also called Ecclesiasticus or The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira. It is one of the seven Books of the Old Testament that is only found in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, not in the Protestant Bible. The Book praises the study of the law, the wisdom of the men of old and their prophecies. His key message is that wisdom is a precious gift from God and everyone must search for it for a meaningful and purposeful life.

In today's reading, the author reminds us that speech is a key in evaluating a person. A person's speech shows the kind of person he/she is. He 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." He cautions us to be careful with our speech: "Praise no one before he speaks, for it is then that people are tested." As Christians, we are called to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and all that he came to teach and die for. The first reading prepares us for the Gospel reading. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us to be honest and truthful witnesses of him and his Gospel message. He uses a number of parables in today's reading to bring home his message of being an authentic witnesses.

He poses this question to his disciples and to us all: "CAN A BLIND PERSON GUIDE A BLIND PERSON?" St. Luke, the author of this Gospel, was a physician by profession prior to his call to become a disciple of Jesus. In his Gospel, Luke describes Jesus as an excellent physician and a shepherd of souls who always heals the whole person: body, soul, mind, and heart.

Everyone knows that a blind guide can't guide another person. We can't guide others if we are blind. Jesus is talking about spiritual blindness, not so much a physical blindness. So, what causes us to become spiritually blind? The Book of Proverbs 29: 18 reminds us that "Without a vision, the people perish."

The Season of Lent is a great opportunity for us to examine our life to find out what are things causing us to be spiritually blind and ask Jesus to heal us of our blindness. By this, we will be ready when he comes or calls us home. Let me conclude my homily with the Prayer of William Barclay (1907- 1978) which resonates with these readings of the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time:

GIVE US THE HUMILITY WHICH REALIZES ITS IGNORANCE, ADMITS ITS MISTAKES, RECOGNIZES ITS NEED, WELCOMES ADVICE, ACCEPTS REBUKE. HELP US ALWAYS TO PRAISE RATHER THAN TO CRITICIZE, TO SYMPATHIZE RATHER THAN TO DISCOURAGE, TO BUILD RATHER THAN TO DESTROY, AND TO THINK OF PEOPLE AT THEIR BEST RATHER THAN AT THEIR WORST." AMEN!