

**March 3, 2019**  
**Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

We know that actions speak louder than words and that people often quote St. Francis to have said, “Preach always and when you have to, use words.” By no means does this mean that our words aren’t important. Jesus makes that very clear when he says in the last verse of Luke’s gospel, “from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.” The deeper question is what fills our heart, fear or love? If my heart is filled with fear, then fear-based words will come out of my mouth. Words of anger, jealousy, insulting words, words that dismiss the other. Words that come from a heart filled with love, will speak with patience, forgiveness, compassion and understanding.

Jesus teaches us today that, “No disciple is superior to his teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.” That is our goal, to be like our great teacher, Jesus, to become more and more like him in our speech and actions. Both the book of Sirach and the Gospel of Luke today focus on our speech. Mature discipleship means that we are confident enough in our faith, to “Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.” (1st Peter 3:15) If someone asked you, “Why are you such a positive person?” what would you say? Are you ready to say gently and respectfully that your faith in the Lord is your reason for hope? The good fruit of gentleness and respect come from the tree of Jesus Christ, the tree of his cross. So too do the words that that we speak.

How can we encourage each other in the faith in our speech? Last week I was on vacation in Arizona with my brother, Brian and my good friend, Fr. Jim Lee, taking in the Mariners Spring Training games. One morning on the way to Mass, Brian’s wife sent a text to their entire

family with a beautiful picture of the sunrise shining on Mt. Baker. She wrote, "I am thankful to God for the gift of this beautiful sunrise this morning and for all of you. What is your reason to give thanks to God today? All of their kids responded within a few minutes. It was a simple and beautiful way to encourage each other with words of faith, thanksgiving and love.

How many here have been a godparent, or a sponsor for confirmation or for someone in the RCIA? When is the last time you spoke with your godchild or the person you sponsored? When was the last time you told them that you are praying for them? I have to admit, these readings today motivated me to reach out to my three godchildren. It has been too long since I have made any contact with them to say that I haven't forgotten them and that I am praying for them. I gave them a gentle reminder that Ash Wednesday is this week and invited them to come to Church. Think of the impact that would make if all of us who are godparents or sponsors would take a moment to reach out to our godchildren.

Each of us meet new people every day, at school, at work, at the store. Think of the difference it would make to pray for the people that we meet. Pray that we will recognize that God sends to us those people to speak words of faith, hope and love. Pray that God will give us the words to He wants us to speak. Jesus is the Word made flesh, and we the Church as members of his body have mouths to speak. How can people know of the love of God revealed by Jesus his Son, and poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit unless we use our mouths to speak?