

## **28th Wednesday II**

### **GALALIANS 5:18-25**

*Brothers and sisters:*

*If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.*

*I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

*In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.*

*If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.*

### **PSALM 1:1-2, 3, 4 & 6**

*Blessed the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked  
Nor walks in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the company of the insolent,  
But delights in the law of the LORD  
and meditates on his law day and night.*

*He is like a tree  
planted near running water,  
That yields its fruit in due season,  
and whose leaves never fade.  
Whatever he does, prospers.*

*Not so the wicked, not so;  
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*

*For the LORD watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked vanishes.*

### **LUKE 11:42-46**

*The Lord said:*

*“Woe to you Pharisees!*

*You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others.*

*Woe to you Pharisees!*

*You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces.*

*Woe to you!*

*You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.”*

*Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, “Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too.”*

*And he said,*

*“Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.”*



*Now the works of the flesh are obvious:  
immorality, impurity, licentiousness,  
idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy,  
outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness,  
dissensions, factions, occasions of envy,  
drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.*

Now that will get the attention of someone trying to sleep during the homily. I had a friend at a parish where I was once assigned say that he liked it when I preached because I spoke about prostitutes and stuff. [Truth in advertising: I used to work undercover in vice for a couple of years when I was a police officer.]

Well here I go again talking about the ways of the flesh.

Without knowing anything else, even if we were ignorant of the Bible and Jesus' holy model, could we not infer the evil that taunts us without any let-up? What television or cinema drama can make a profit without including that list? They have even co-opted our children's cartoons and created animated porn.

We who have been taught about the degradation of such libertine behavior are warned by Jesus to not tout our propriety in disdain of others:

*Woe...  
You impose on people burdens hard to carry,  
but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.*

But Paul warns us: *that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Our judgementalism comes from our predisposition that we (the good) are in and they (the bad) are out. I am grateful to the Spirit that whenever I hear people talk about "those" people that my hackles rise.

When Paul talks about those who do such things, he is not excluding a group of certain people. He talking about what makes it to Heaven and what does not. You have heard it said, particularly about riches, that "You can't take that to Heaven."

This is what you can't take to Heaven:  
*immorality, impurity, licentiousness,  
idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy,  
outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness,  
dissensions, factions, occasions of envy,  
drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.*

There is no place in Heaven where “*and the like*” can exist.

What about the one who embraces the fruit of the Spirit:

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

I can imagine there is plenty of room in Paradise for me to take such fruit.

That brings me back to the “prostitutes and stuff”. Although there seems to be no lack of cooperation in financing their enterprise, those so employed are not held in decent regard by the rest of society.

Right now, flash back to hear Jesus exclaim: WOE.

While enforcing the laws against prostitution for over two years I got to know some of those ladies and a bit more about their lives. When I was an unknown face, it was fairly easy for me to hang around the red-light district and get picked up by prostitute. As soon as they solicited me for an immoral purpose, I would give a signal to my surveillance team which would respond and arrest the solicitor.

You can imagine that I couldn't do that later a second time with the same person. My enforcement efforts would then have to focus on a time-consuming presence, most often in my unmarked police car. Of course, the solicitors knew who I was and which was my unmarked car. They weren't at much risk of me arresting them, but they couldn't conduct much business while I was around. If a John pulled up beside them where they were street-walking, I would pull up right behind him. The John might not have known who I was, but the street-walker did and would break off the solicitation. Every once in a while, one of the solicitors would tell me that I couldn't be there forever, that I'd have to leave sometime. My standard reply was, “While I'm here, I get paid and you do not. Who do you think can last longer?”

Sometimes when I was parked and they were standing, a banter would develop, like two from opposing teams fronting each other off. It was during those times that people get to know each other. I heard many of them talk about their lives, their hopes and their fears. Some had children to feed. Some were caught in almost impossible life situations. There was no lack of fear, drugs or abuse. I got to hear of some of their own *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

What do I mean, “self-control”? Well, I have seen the discipline of some at work, albeit illegitimate work. One solicitor I knew showed up for work every single day. This woman didn't work the penthouses, she walked the streets for her fares, in the summer and in the winter, in the snow and in the rain. One should pause for a moment to reflect on the hopelessness in her life that motivated such diligence in such a dangerous trade.

In one of our sidewalk conversations where she was annoyed about how I was frustrating her business, I told her I would write a reference for her for any job application she would seek. Ask any manager about the value of an employee who shows up for work every day.

Being able to have some insight into some of these lives helps erase the lines between “us people” and “those people”. I have come with kneeling gratitude to realize that “there, but by the grace of God, go I.”

It’s not about “those kind of people” not making it to Heaven.

If at my end time, I show up and I am still clutching *immorality, impurity, licentiousness... and the like*, how am I going to be able to embrace the *love, joy and peace* of His Kingdom?

It is gift. It is life purchased for us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Embrace the fruit of his Spirit. Have a taste of Paradise. It will lead you to your destiny.

LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER.

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