



Homily for 9/23/2018

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time, Year B

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*Prayer and fasting needed to train us to carry the cross*

From the Gospel:

He was teaching his disciples and telling them,  
“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men  
and they will kill him,  
and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”  
But they did not understand the saying,  
and they were afraid to question him.”

The disciples were afraid to question him, but we who have come to know and to believe in the Love God has for us should be afraid no longer and rather speak to the Lover of our souls and ask, “Jesus why are they trying to kill you?”

The answer he will give is to look into our own souls. “Look and see and be aware of the wickedness, that is the worldly, fleshy, mundane vision that has clouded your own soul. A soul that was made for me but which is far from me.” We are called by our good shepherd to do an examination of conscience. We may be tempted to look away but he compels us by his own example to open our eyes and see:

From the first reading from Wisdom:

“The wicked say:  
Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us”

Why do they try to kill you Jesus? He answers, because the world has been set at odds with its creator. Man, who fell through disobedience, has lost the vision of his face. Adam hides from Him amidst the trees of paradise - out of fear. This fear leads to hatred. The world, in fear and then hatred, tells us to resist suffering at all costs. And yet Jesus tells us that He is marching straight into the heart of Human Suffering - crucifixion, in order to redeem human suffering. To redeem something means to buy it back or to give value to it again. Jesus wants to give value to our suffering and he wants us to value it to, not despise it. No wonder they find him so obnoxious. No wonder they want to kill him. And if I am honest with myself, ‘they’ is me . . . But it shall not be so among you.

John 15:18

“If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first.  
If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.

As human beings we are a body-soul composite. The proper ordering of this composite is first spirit, then body. But the flesh wants to have dominion over the Spirit. It is a usurper. The Spirit must be restored to its rightful place as the ruler of the human being. But this means there must be a struggle. But there is a goodness to this struggle. Just like the struggle of parents to give their crying baby a medicinal shot, just like the addict who is cut off from his drug must go through the pains of detoxification, just like the wild horse must be tamed by the whip of the rider, so too the flesh must be tamed and restrained. But if wit will be tamed and restrained it will benefit from the struggle. If the Flesh only knew! It has been misled by the great deceiver. If only the flesh would



hear and believe in the promise - if it would be led by the spirit, even the flesh will rejoice in the land of the living, a glorified life were there will never be decay.

Our mother the Church has been entrusted with this message and she bids us fast and pray. We have forgotten what she said. We have rebelled because we thought it too hard we have found it obnoxious. We heard the subtle voice of the tempter try to persuade us with worldly ways of thinking. Even the voice of our mother is weak about this important matter these days. But The message is still there. We must be Spiritual People - thinking first of the needs of the soul. We must stop making so many provisions for the flesh. So many have rejected the ancient wisdom of our mother the church. Perhaps because there had been a few who were over zealous, who forgot to love the body even as they were subduing it. There was a mixed message that should be made right. Like that rider with his horse- The rider is the leader of the horse. If the horse were in control there would be chaos and danger for both rider and horse. And so the rider has to whip the horse from time to time to put him in his place. But a rider who whips too often or without love for the horse or without respect for what the horse can and does do for him will quickly find that horse in open rebellion. No, rather it's a matter of having the horse show proper respect to its master and the master properly loving the horse and treating it accordingly. The Same can be said about the soul and the body. There is a middle way that is not a naive throwing off of all spiritual disciplines. Moderation in all things. We can start right here and right now.

Fridays have always been a day of fasting and penance. Do the spiritual exercise of fasting this Friday. Train your body to glorify God. Starting right now make your genuflection a real thing not just an empty sign. Bending your knee before the Lord means that you are making him the sovereign of your lives. You are making him the Lord of both your soul and your body. If you have bad knees, don't complain and make everyone stop genuflecting simply because your knees are shot. But make a profound bow from the waist instead. And if someone makes that profound bow, don't judge them - do in charity for the other what the other can't do and bend your knee for those who can't. Genuflecting is a small mortification.

Mortification literally means to make death. The Church encourages her children, especially those who desire to grow in the spiritual life, to embrace small mortifications. That is, die to your passions a little each day so that you exercise dominion over your body and you can offer it as a spiritual sacrifice. It can be as simple as eating your food bland instead of putting salt on it. You have thus mortified your tongue and trained it to obey the spirit. Don't do it always. It is not meant to be a punishment of the flesh, just a training. The point is to find lasting joy. A sick child needs the shot, the addict will only find health when he is clean, iThe horse properly trained can do great and wonderful things for the rider. The Human Being will only be truly happy when the Soul governs the body. This is why the Christian way is despised by the world. Do not be afraid.

John 16:20

Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy.

John 16: 33

I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”