

## **HOMILY for 8<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C**

This Sunday's Gospel warns us about following a blind guide. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

In a small town, three churches decided to work together to improve the community. The three preachers decided to meet regularly to mow lawns, paint houses, & perform other outreach in the village. On their first day, they spent several hours in the sun, preparing a garden for a homeless shelter. They really enjoyed getting to know each other, & when the work was done, they sat in the shade sipping lemonade.

"You know, guys," one said, "this has been wonderful. I've needed this kind of fellowship - & after one day with you, I feel like I really know you. Can I make a confession & ask you to pray for me? I have a terrible problem with alcohol."

The others agreed that they would pray for their friend. Then the second pastor spoke up. "This has been a marvelous day. And I have a special need, too. I've been a secret gambler for years. I just can't give it up. Will you pray for me?"

The other two pastors agreed to pray for him; when the third one announced, "Well, since we're sharing our secret faults today, I should let you know that I have a problem with gossip."

At least those leaders knew their blind spots & admit it. Anyway, in this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus asked His disciples, "Can a blind man act as a guide to a blind man? Will they not both fall into a ditch?" He went on, "A good tree does not produce decayed fruit any more than a decayed tree produces good fruit. Each tree is known by its yield... A good man produces goodness from the good in his heart; an evil man produces evil out of his store of evil." Jesus wants to explain to us where good/evil things come from. Every day we see all kinds of good/evil acts happen around us, but we often do not pay much attention to them. Sometimes a horrendous evil act might show up unexpectedly & make our jaws drop due to its brutal nature & scale of destruction. That might be the only time we would pause & wonder how the culprit would be able to carry out such an evil act. But, we have never had enough time & effort to investigate how those evil acts have developed or figure out where they have come from. We have spent even less time & effort to ponder on good deeds & their origin. Don't worry! Today Jesus helps us point out the origin of our good/evil deeds, namely, our hearts. A good deed comes from the kind & generous heart of a good person while an evil act from the bitter & selfish heart of an evil one.

Certainly an evil person would cause all sorts of evil acts – big & small alike. Those will show up in all shapes & forms at the least expected time. However, that is not the only damage that an evil person would cause to a community. This person would also be a bad example & mislead others with his/her evil behaviors. That is why Jesus posed these questions, "Can a blind man act as a guide to a blind man? Will they not both fall into a ditch?" In other words, Jesus warned us that we should not rely on an evil person to lead us. For this person would not know how to guide us & eventually get both parties fall into ruin. The reason an evil person may never be able to lead us is because his/her heart is always dark & full of evil acts & horrible schemes. If we follow an evil person, we will end up with an evil heart & our lives will fall into ruin. However, Jesus does not only warn us to avoid evil people. He also tells us to stop putting

our trust & hope in human beings. Rather, we should put our trust & hope in God & count on God to be our faithful guide. We will never be disappointed to have God as our guide.

Why should we rely on God & good people, not evil ones, to be our guide & hope? For, like a good tree, they will always produce good deeds & wonderful results. They will never disappoint us. On the other hand, if we assume that a bad person can guide us & produce good things, we just fool ourselves. For our Lord Jesus said, "...A good tree does not produce decayed fruit any more than a decayed tree produces good fruit." In case we still have any doubt about that, Jesus wanted us to remember this, "...Each tree is known by its yield." So, our Lord reminds us that we could tell if someone is good or evil by examining his/her past & present actions. Like the relationship between the tree & its fruits, we could tell whom a person really is by reviewing one's past & present actions. Throughout our human history, we have seen how that general rule has proven to be right. Unfortunately, we have let evil people fool us & deceive us to believe that they could be the good guide for us in spite of all their bad actions in the past & present time. Because of our blindness & naiveté, we humans have suffered all kinds of disasters & destructions in our human history.

A good example of that would be leaders such as Hitler & Stalin. Those ruthless leaders were able to charm people & make their supporters believe that they would do good things for them in spite of their terrible past. Those naïve supporters did not listen to our Lord's wise advice in today's gospel on connecting the bad past actions of those leaders with their true identity. They ended up mistakenly picking up those leaders to be their guide & had to pay a hefty price for it. Those bad leaders not only misled them but also caused great harm & destruction to our human family. If we are not careful, we could make the same mistake & follow blind guide/wrong leader in our time. In case we still do not believe in finding one's true identity by reviewing one's past & present actions, this Sunday's First Reading offers us another way to judge a person. Here is the new criteria, "When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do a man's faults when he speaks. As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace, so in his conversation is the test of a man. The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had; so too does a man's speech disclose the bent of his mind." So, we are told that we could find out one's faults & judge a person by listening to one's speech/conversation. When someone opens one's mouth, we can tell what is really in his/her mind & heart. Thence, we could figure out his/her true identity as well.

My dear brothers & sisters, we surely do not want to follow a blind guide. For this person will lead us into a ditch & bring us lots of harm & destruction. We should put our trust & hope in God & good leaders because they will always produce great results & wonderful blessings for us. A couple of ways to help us distinguish good leaders from bad ones are by watching their actions & listening to their speeches/conversations.