

Sunday 23, 2018 - 25th Sunday in ordinary time

Winston Churchill, the great British statesman, was once asked, "Doesn't it thrill you to know that every time you make a speech the hall is going to be packed to overflowing?" Winston Churchill said, "It's quite flattering, but whenever I feel that way I always remember that if instead of making a speech, I was being hanged, there'd be twice as many people." That's how he kept himself in service to the British people.

Today we talk about original sin and the fruits of original sin. Our readings are geared for that. At the time of Alexander the Great, several hundred years before Christ, the world was united under the Greek Empire for about 500 years. It united everybody from Italy all the way to India. But the Greek culture and the Greek people were very intolerant. They did not want anyone to have their own customs, they wanted everyone to be "Greek." So, when they came into a country they did everything in their power to stomp out the religion, they stomped out all the things that were non-Greek and said, "You need to be Greek." Some people went that way and some people didn't. The Jews had the same problem, but they were especially persecuted because the Greeks came in and started to kill those who were not practicing the Greek culture. That's who we see today as "the wicked." The wicked were the Jews who went away from God and started worshipping idols and doing the practices of the Greeks. They adopted the homosexuality and all that that the Greeks had and so it was very evil in the sight of God and in the sight of the Jews. We read the book of Wisdom and it says, "the wicked say." One of the fruits of original sin is we are drawn more to bad, drawn more to the evil than we are to good. What we're talking about here is, even we have that problem. We have the sayings, "goody two shoes," or you call somebody that's trying to be good, a "boy scout," (which if you are a boy scout is like, Thank You) but they are trying to make it an insult. People practicing good and trying to be good, moral, legal, are not seen as anything worthwhile in our society, our culture because we follow the evil. If you look at the news, who are they following? Celebrities who are doing immoral things. Politicians who, well that's their whole life but...anytime you follow a politician you are really hard up for news, but that's what we're doing. We are giving attention to the evil and not to the good. That's what Wisdom is talking about, is how the evil people try to wipe out the good people. They don't like to have them around reminding them of their guilty conscious or what's right because they want to justify their lives. But he says, "the Son of God will defend the good." Ultimately, sometimes we have to remember not in this life but in the life to come, that He will truly come to us.

In the second reading Saint James talks about another fruit of original sin and that is following our passions. Following our animal instincts, our animal parts of our body. We all have three parts to our brain and the first part is called, the reptile brain. Most people tend to follow the reptile brain because it says, "If it feels good, do it. If you want it now, have it now." Then the other brains are overridden. Saint James is saying, if we are Christian we need to follow the third brain, the brain where you think. The brain where you take a moment and say, "Wait a minute what are the long-term consequences of my actions? Who am I going to hurt? Who is going to benefit from this?" He says that getting into passions leads to war, and violence, and sexual immorality, and all these things that God does not see as good. And he said we have to control our passions. That's what we have to do. And he said that we also have to make sure (later on James says) we have to fight the fruit of original sin, which is to go toward the bad. And Jesus comes along and shows us in the gospel, how we can do that. He's walking down the street with his twelve apostles, and when you read this it's kind of like, was He the Dad and they were the little kids? We're back to arguing all the time; I'm wondering if one of them said, "When are we

going to get there Jesus?" They are arguing about who's going to be the greatest or who is the greatest. This is a fruit of original sin. And all the time they've been with Jesus, they should know who's the greatest, Jesus is. He is trying to teach them and they can't get over the fact that, "Well we have to be great, we have to be number one." I remember when I was in seventh grade I was always getting 100's on the tests in science class, so I was number one. But then the bullies came up to me after class and said, "If you get another 100, we're going to beat you up." So I said, "Okay fine." I missed one question on purpose and got a 98, still got an "A." Everyone is always trying to be the greatest. Jesus says, "No! We are not trying to be the greatest, I'm not teaching you to be the greatest, I want you to be a "diaconos" Diaconos is where we get the word, deacon, and it means servant (it really means table waiter but it's servant) a person who spends their day taking care of other people. The reason the Church applied this to the third order of clergy is because the deacons originally were supposed to take the Eucharist, take food, take money, to those in the parish that needed it. And he knew them by name, he was to serve the needs of the poor, of those who can't get out of the house, all those people that need extra help. That was the reason a deacon was called a deacon, because he was called to serve. And still if you go to ordination for deacons, that's the emphasis, to serve. So Jesus says everybody should be a deacon, a diaconos, a servant. He says that's how you become great in the eyes of God. He also drives the point home by taking a child and bringing him in. In the Aramaic language, the word for child is, "Talya." Talya means, child or servant. It has two meanings. So when Jesus is placing a child in their midst and saying, "You must be talya," these guys are getting a double meaning. You must be a servant and you must be childlike. Children had no rights in society. Everybody loved them because they came along and if they lived long enough they were going to take care of you in your old age, they were your social security. But, they had no standing, they were just there. You supported them, you took care of them and they had to rely in complete trust on their parents, and on the adults to take care of them. Servants, the same way. They have to rely on someone else to make sure they're going to be taken care of, even though they are taking care of others. So Jesus says you have to do that. And in Greek it's a little more dramatic. In Greek, the word is, "pais." Pais can mean child, or slave. What is a slave? A slave is a servant. So Jesus is driving the point home that you must put others first in order to stop the passion, in order to stop the fruits of original sin. We must be careful to serve the least important, not the ones that are rich, powerful, and famous. We need to serve all. That's what He says. And if you do that then He says, "You receive Me," which means a Christian, a follower of Me. There used to be a song in Sunday school, we don't sing it anymore, but it had the word joy in it. And the song explained the word joy this way: J-Jesus first, Y-You last, O-Others in between. So it was Jesus first, others second and us third. He said the only way you can have joy is to do that. Jesus let us know time and time again in the scriptures, even in the old Testament it says, if you want true joy, if you want to fight the fruits of original sin, then you must serve others. You must reach outside yourself and reach to others. That is what God created us for and that's the imitation of Christ. What did Christ do? He came to serve all of us. So, He wants us as followers to learn that lesson as well. So, we use the word joy, to put it in perspective: Jesus, others, and then yourself, in order to combat the fruits of original sin and evil itself.

God bless you.