



Homily for Sunday, June 17, 2007

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Mt. 6: 22-34

Christ the teacher wants us to learn how to live according to the will of God. The icon of Christ the teacher is found on the icon screen in all our churches and this image reminds us that Christ came to enlighten us, to show us the way to everlasting life. God wants us to become loving and responsible individuals.

By their nature love and responsibility both require freedom of choice and commitment. Thus decisions we make give our life a certain direction and orientation. We all have to decide what is going to be our goal in life, we all need to decide on what profession we will follow, and how we are going to use the talents and opportunities available to us. The choices we are faced with make life interesting, but also challenging and at times problematic.

In today's gospel we hear our Lord say "the eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness."

Vision gives us a sense of orientation. By means of sight we know our surroundings and are able to establish a relationship with them. Every one of actions is guided by our vision. However, Christ is not talking about physical sight, but moral vision. What the eye is to the body, the conscience is to the soul. Just as good vision helps guide us safely in this world, so our conscience guides us in our moral life by helping us make the best decisions. A blind person has trouble moving about, likewise, a person with a defective conscience or a mistaken understanding of the purpose of life has difficulty making decisions which will improve one's quality of life. Such people have difficulty distinguishing between good and evil.

Christ taught the importance of human freedom and individual conscience. Jesus neither compelled nor commanded obedience, but inspired many to acknowledge and accept the love of his Heavenly Father.

A high officer of the French army once went to the village of Ars to listen to a sermon of Fr. Vianney, the saintly priest of whom many people were speaking of highly. On his return home he was unusually serious and quiet, and his worried assistant said: "What was your impression of the sermon preached by the priest at Ars? I know you have heard the most famous preachers."

The officer candidly replied: "Up to now I had always enjoyed hearing a good preacher, but after this sermon, there is something I don't like: my own life." The



displeasure with himself was the beginning of the officer's conversion. He understood that one doesn't go to church to hear sermons just because one enjoys hearing them, rather one goes to church to learn the truth about ourselves and the word in which we live. This is the only way we can become more like our Lord himself.

Christian morality is not something that is easy, but it always reminds us of the importance of love of God and neighbor and our obligations to them. The important thing is that our actions should be based on our firm personal conviction, the fruit of our understanding of ourselves and the situation facing us in the light of Christ's teaching. Using our intelligence, and guided by the teaching of our Lord that we find in Sacred scripture, our conscience will help us come to make the right decisions which will benefit both to ourselves and others.

One important lesson that Christ taught us is that we should pray to God as our heavenly Father. In the Old Testament, the name of God was greatly revered, and said out loud only by the High Priest in the sanctuary, and on only one day of the year. Jesus teaches us to call on God as "Father", just as a child call out "Daddy". Jesus reminds us that God as our Heavenly Father loves us and cares for us. As a father cares for his children and provides for them, God as our heavenly Father does even more for us. In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord said: "Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? How much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him?" On Father's Day we thank our fathers for all they have done for us, providing food, clothes, shelter, but more so for the good example of a Christian life, and the encouragement and inspiration to discover the will of God.

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