

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 6, 2020

“If I tell the wicked, ‘O wicked one, you shall surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death.” (Ezekiel 33:8)

I have often listened to parents who expressed feelings of joy and self-doubt when they saw their first newborn baby. Questions flooded their minds: “Will I be a good father or mother?”, “Will I be able to provide for their needs?”, and so many others similar to these. Thankfully, these questions subsided as following children were born into their families. Yet, these parents understood one basic principle concerning their first child. It is the fact that no child born today is a fully complete person. Each child would need guidance to help them form who they would eventually grow up to become. The parent, out of love, would assume this responsibility; no matter how daunting the task seemed. Although many of you know these feelings firsthand, allow me to use this image to highlight the words of God spoken to us through the prophet Ezekiel.

As you know, a child has to learn to distinguish the good from the bad. Through the guidance of parents, influence of role models, trial and error, the child can slowly begin to judge individuals and things. The most difficult aspect of this learning process, and one that continues even into adulthood, concerns the viewing of something as “good” when in reality that may not be the case.

In a simple way, God is reminding all of us through Ezekiel, that this process is never complete and we must continue to offer guidance to those we love; from childhood to adulthood. One may wonder why this is; for it seems many believe they truly know already what is good for them. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, can we profess any certain confidence that this is truly the case?

Human actions are not merely free choices. We can understand them as words. Words which reveal to those around us who we truly are. The famous saying; “Actions speak louder than words,” expresses this quite well. It is through our free choices that we begin to define our moral character. This is a lifelong process. We are not given foreknowledge of how events will play out due to these choices. We can only assume that this choice is the right one based upon all of the information one has available to them at that moment.

God’s words, through Ezekiel, remind us of the responsibility each one has to assisting others to make good choices. All of us want to live in a world where everyone cares for and assists their brothers and sisters. Could this world become a reality? Yes, it very well could. But, will it come into bloom if we fail in our responsibility to guide others? The choice of assisting others in developing their moral character and foundation is ours to make.