

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 27, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

“The man who is always talking does not advance much in knowledge. A good listener will always learn more than the one who talks too much.”
(My Daily Bread; A Summary of the Spiritual Life, p. 215)

This weekend, we are given a common theme which can be taken from the Book of Sirach and the Gospel of Saint Luke. This common theme centers upon our speech. From Sirach, we have this thought: “Praise no one before he speaks.” From Saint Luke, we have this thought: “From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.” Both can provide a valuable lesson if we reflect upon them as a means of understanding ourselves being created in God’s image and likeness.

The Book of Genesis begins with these words: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1). For our reflection, we need to consider “How” creation began. We are given this answer in three words found in verse three: “And God said.” (Genesis 3:3). Being created in God’s image and likeness means we too possess this same ability – to create using words. And, our creations, the products of our words, convey those things which we value the most (which reside within our hearts).

My family, what is it that we value most and does our language convey the value we have placed upon those things? As I typed this last line, I realized this question conveys a deeper meaning from my heart. Please allow me to indulge this thought and open my heart to you. I cannot help but feel powerless as I look around our church on any given Sunday. I remember so many of our family who no longer attend, not just our church, but any church. So often I have spoken with these, encouraging them to return; apologizing if I were the reason for their absence. I have read books and articles, listened to talks given by experts prescribing various approaches to be used to bring the fallen away back into the fold. Questions have flooded, and still do flood, my mind as to what more could I do; what could we offer. Answers have been sought; more insightful preaching, a more reverent liturgy, a more classical approach to music, becoming more engaged in the life of the community, offering a more technologically interactive experience, another program offered or committee instituted, and, to be completely honest, a fresh approach from a new shepherd. What more can be done to bring our family back together?

Through exploring and reflecting upon all of these questions, I now offer one line as an answer – “Flowery words can never replace gritty deeds.” We can acknowledge the problem: as the world becomes more secular, the influence of God and religion has become a more distant memory. We can create as many programs, committees, and whatever else our words will allow us to create, yet if these same words, coupled with the necessary corresponding actions, do not express the true feelings within our hearts, then they are meaningless. Our actions and words must together express the love we have for all; those not here as well as you who are. Both my words and my actions must convey that love and desire which resides within my heart for each of you to have a deep and abiding relationship with God. One that begins here on earth and culminates with your residing with Him eternally in blessed Heaven. Yet, even this is lacking. For without the Holy Spirit first opening the hearts of all, both to speak and to listen, then what truly can we do. Every day, offer to the Holy Spirit a prayer, your prayer, pleading for His Divine Assistance for all to be open to God. The only way, I firmly believe, we can show the world that faith in God is more meaningful than any other way man can produce, is to live a life of intimate union with God. Pray each day that the Holy Spirit will assist us all in this worthwhile endeavor.