

March 3, 2019
8th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 6:39-45

And he told them a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye. "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

Background:

The gospel text is a continuation of Jesus's instruction to his disciples that began two weeks ago with the blessings and woes. That teaching continued last week with Jesus' instruction to love your enemies and to do good to those who cannot repay you.

At the time of Jesus, the human person was understood to have three facets, each associated with parts of the body. The eyes and the head were understood as those parts of the body that collected information. The ears and the mouth were looked upon as the centers of self-expression. Lastly, the hands and feet were understood as the parts of the body that would put into action what a person had taken in from the eyes and the head and was now centered in the heart. The authentic person was the one whose three parts were in harmony. The people were also aware that some would deliberately disguise their true self.

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus is the only person who used the word hypocrite. In Luke 6:39-42 he used the term to characterize certain people as misguided teachers. He later calls the crowd hypocrites who know how to accurately read the signs in nature but are unable to predict the present situation. Later in Luke Jesus will once again use the term "hypocrite" to describe the crowd who criticize him for healing a woman on the Sabbath, while they will rescue an ox or donkey on the sabbath when necessary. (Luke 13:15) In both cases Jesus challenges the crowd to examine their lives to see what their actions reveal about their interiors.

Reflection Questions:

1. Who do you think of as your guides for the different parts of your life?
2. For whom are you a guide?
3. When you think of examining your life and your motives...
4. When you hear Jesus call those he is addressing hypocrites...
5. The image of a beam in one's own eye while noticing the speck in the eye of the other...
6. Can you talk to God honestly about your desire to see the truth of your own life, the parts of your life that you find difficult to talk or even think about, or some other aspect of your own life that arose in this gospel?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

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Excerpts from the readings for March 3, 2019, the Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do one's faults when one speaks.
As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace, so in tribulation is the test of the just.
The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had; so too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind.
Praise no one before he speaks, for it is then that people are tested.

Lord, it is good to give thanks to you, to sing praise to your name, Most High,
to proclaim your kindness at dawn and your faithfulness throughout the night.
The just one shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
Declaring how just is the Lord, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

Brothers and sisters: When this which is corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility
and this which is mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the word that is written shall come about:
Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted
to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

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out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks."

Excerpts from Sirach 27:4-7; Psalm 92:2-3, 13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; and Luke 6:39-45