

25th Ordinary Sunday
September 19, 2021
“Bearers of Good or Evil”

Wis 2:12...20
Jas 3:16 - 4:3
Mk 9:30-37

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the greatest disappointments in the lives of children or young people is to realize that loved ones are flawed and imperfect. When we were young, most of us had someone we idolized. They were extremely good and kind to us – and to others as well. And then, one day, we were let down in some way. Something happened and they fell from the pedestal upon which we had placed them.

As we grew older, we realized that everyone has shortcomings. No one is perfect. We, ourselves, have done wrong – We have brought pain into the lives and hearts of others. Then we came to understand that there is evil in the world – and that we contribute to that evil with our sins.

However, then we have a choice. We can continue to foster evil – Or we can do all in our power to overcome it. And we do this by the way we live our lives at each moment.

The scriptures for today present us with examples of just how important it is to champion good over evil. Because they also show us how good people are mistreated and even punished because of the good they do and the lives they try to live.

The Book of Wisdom tells us how wicked and evil people react against those who contradict them by their lives. Good always stands out against evil. But instead of dealing with their personal guilt and making changes for the better, some people attempt to discredit the good person any way that they can.

They will attribute unworthy motives to the person. They will dredge up mistakes, failures, and sins from the person’s past – These will be things for which they repented and left behind. They even put obstacles in their way and try to make them fail. And they do this despite the harm it does to that person and others around them. Moreover, if the good person is prophetic – if they attempt to help them see the truth about themselves – then they might pay for their prophetic role with suffering – or even death!

This last truth is taken up by St. Mark in the Gospel for today. Jesus is the one to whom the passage in the Book of Wisdom points. Unlike even the best of us, Jesus was perfect. His entire life is an example of how every one of us should live. Furthermore, Jesus suffered because his example and words put evil in bold relief wherever he was.

Today, Jesus foretells what will happen to him, sometime, in the weeks and months ahead. But that will not be the end. He will rise – which was something the disciples could not understand.

Then Jesus takes them to task. He upbraids them for their foolish arguments over which of them was the greatest. It is here that the disciples exhibit their own basic selfishness and flawed sinfulness. Like us, they wanted to be somebody – They wanted to be recognized as someone important – But it was in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons!

As a consequence, Jesus did an extraordinary thing. Jesus set a child before them all. He took a helpless, powerless child – with no status whatsoever – and told them that this is the way we all must be! We must become the least of all and the servant of all – especially in our minds and hearts – if we would become what God wants us to be. Moreover, it is in our childlike simplicity that Jesus and the Father will come to us!

St. James minces no words when he tells us the source of all the disorder, conflict, and even warfare in our lives and in the world. It is the evil in ourselves. It is the selfishness in our minds and hearts which make life so difficult – especially for the ones we love – for those closest to us – for those we least want to harm in any way.

Brothers and Sisters, whenever we fail to see the good in others – we do them harm. Whenever we fail to be a good example – or fail to correct others in a kind way – we do them harm. Whenever we deny the good in others – or the good they do – we do harm to the world itself!

So let us pray for God's grace of enlightenment – Let us pray for the courage to accept truth and goodness wherever we find it – And despite our failures and sins, may God always be with us as we keep Jesus always before us!

Amen.

September 19, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra