

6th Ordinary Sunday
February 16, 2020
“Godly Choices”

Sir 15:15-20
1 Cor 2:6-10
Mt 5:17...37

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

As human beings we have to make decisions everyday. Our work, our relationships, our leisure and recreation are constantly dependent upon our choices and decisions. People who are mature usually make decisions based upon what is right and good, best, most effective and efficient, and beneficial to everyone involved.

However, sometimes we do not choose this way. We want to take the easy way out, the short-cut – any selfish way that serves ourself. Perhaps we even choose a way that we know is the wrong way. Unfortunately, we always pay a price when we make a bad decision. Things go awry; someone gets injured; we receive a bad report; someone we love is hurt; or a relationship is damaged!

The Book of Sirach counsels us always to choose the godly way of doing things. Being able to know what is good and right and true is why God gave us a conscience and an inherent moral sense. God even went a step further when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments which cover everything – if we read between the lines and ask for the Spirit’s guidance!

But God also gave us free will. We can decide or choose contrary to what God wants and expects from us. We can jump into water or fire; we can choose eternal life or death, by our decisions in the here and now for good or for evil. Moreover, what is tragic is that choosing evil always puts us on a slippery slope. One bad choice often leads to another and to another – until we can feel hopelessly lost and beyond change or salvation.

Fortunately, God never gives up on us as long as we are alive. God is merciful and forgiving. God is lavish with His grace. He gave us a conscience to begin with – He allows us to experience shame and guilt to get our attention when we have done wrong. It remains for us to repent of our sins, change our ways, and begin to make up for all of our wrongdoing.

Of course, we always suffer in some way for the sins and the mistakes we have made – because there are natural consequences to our bad choices. Children can learn this at an early age, if their parents allow them to suffer the consequences of their misbehavior and mistakes. Good parenting always sets limits for children and is not afraid of tough love when children test or exceed those limits.

In St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus expands upon the letter of the law in the Ten Commandments. He teaches us the way to real honesty and authenticity as disciples and children of God. We can't be like the Pharisees who bent the Commandments to serve themselves – and to excuse truly reprehensible behavior.

Murder is wrong, but so is anything that hurts the body, the soul, or the psyche of another! Adultery is forbidden, but so is anything in our minds or hearts that violates the opposite sex for our own selfish pleasure! Even divorce should be rare – and only when the marriage was a sham from the beginning and devoid of covenant love and commitment.

Jesus also tells us how important it is to break with those people or things which are instrumental in our downfall. We must make the tough decision to cut ourselves off from whatever leads us into sin and away from God.

Finally, in the New Testament reading, St. Paul warns us not to be taken in by the current culture. The wisdom and the ways of God are never those of the world. The faithful Jews had to resist and reject all the pseudo-wisdom of the pagan Greek culture which had spread everywhere. Likewise, we must resist all that the media, the entertainment industry, and many politicians have to say about what is good and moral and right! We must stand against and work to repeal some of our laws that go against the natural law and the order that God established for the human person!

Brothers and Sisters, it is a daunting task to stay faithful to God and to all that God asks of us in our world today. But with God's grace we can face and live through whatever we encounter on our journey to the Kingdom.

So, let us pray today, that we always make truly godly choices in all that we do – And may we inherit the eternal life that Jesus has promised!

Amen.

February 16, 2020

Msgr. Russell G. Terra