

## **8TH SUNDAY ORD. (C) YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS**

St. Paul reminds us today that a time will come when our mortal bodies will take on immortality, and the perishable will take on imperishability. This is the everlasting victory Jesus Christ has won for us. He has destroyed death forever, and thus death has lost its sting, that is, it has lost its power to destroy the human soul.

But this victory will be experienced by those whose hearts are full of good intentions, and do not pretend to be who they are not. It is for those who are devoted to the work of the Lord.

The first reading and the gospel tell us that it is good to know ourselves and accept who we are. We cannot hide our true selves because what we have harboured in our hearts, whether good or bad will be known by our talks. "One's speech discloses the bent of one's mind". Also, "The fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree".

Jesus's message is very clear that "every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thorn bushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles". Jesus used the same analogy to describe the false prophets: "Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits," (Mt.7:15-16a). My people have a similar saying that, 'a crab does not give birth to a bird'.

We may profess faith in God but our actions may be different from what we say. This can be seen in the way some of us the clergy and religious, some politicians and professionals of different fields, who call themselves Christians, and many Catholic Christians behave. We trumpet our membership as Christians, but when it comes to the real Christian life it is a totally different thing. Our way of life is full of deceit.

It is very easy to know many things about somebody than to know ourselves. We can write pages of the faults of others, but one sentence about our own faults. This is what Jesus is reminding us about in today's gospel, that we should know that weaknesses and faults we carry may be heavier than the other person's faults we talk about.

If we want to be clothed with immortality, then we should clean our hearts of dirt, and fill it with good intentions. It is then that what we say will be encouraging words, and words that will bring peace and consolation to people who listen to us.

St. James talks about good speech, and the damage the tongue can cause: "Someone who does not trip in speech has reached perfection and is able to keep the whole body in a tight rein...Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world; it infects the whole body; catching itself fire from hell...nobody can tame the tongue - it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse people who are made in God's image," (Jam.3:2-10). "Nobody who fails to keep a tight rein on the tongue can claim to be religious; this is mere self-deception; that person's religion is worthless," (Jam.1:26).

When we look into a mirror, whom do we see? No body other than ourself. Is what you see outwardly the same as what is inside us? Does what you say reflect exactly who you are? Jesus is our teacher, and whatever He said went with what He did. Even His enemies knew that He was honest. When some Pharisees and Herodians wanted to trap Him about taxes, this is how they addressed Him: "Master we know that you are an honest man, that you are not afraid of anyone, because human rank means nothing to you, and that you teach the way of God with all honesty," (Mk. 12:13-14a). Are we honest followers of His? Does what comes from our hearts through the lips give testimony to our lives as Christians fully devoted to the work of the Lord?