

**Here are two homilies that I gave on 27 & 29 September 2016. Unfortunately, there are no Hungarian translations.
(Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!)**

2016.09.27

Here is another homily I wrote on secret sins. It overlaps somewhat with last week's Sunday homily, however the two homilies aren't in agreement in that each identifies the top secret sin as something else. Taking this in consideration, I hope you find both sermons worthwhile.

(Lk9:51-56) In one place, the psalmist prays, "Lord, save me from my secret sins!" (Ps19:12) This prayer should ever be on our lips. Self-knowledge is a rare commodity in any time or place. Philosophers of old used to say, "Know thyself!" For this reason, we can all afford to ask ourselves whether we're not the victims of self-deception. After all, in today's gospel, our Lord's hand-picked apostles had greatly deceived themselves. Indeed, it's hard to imagine any greater self-deception. Our Lord came to save, but James and John wanted Him to condemn. He came for peace, but they wanted violence. He preached forgiveness, but they wanted vengeance. Their request wasn't exactly, "An eye for an eye." It was, "Many lives for one rebuff." The Sons of Thunder, as they were called, wanted our Lord to destroy a Samaritan village that had refused Him hospitality. Moreover, James and John mistook this folly of theirs for religious zeal. Do we ever do likewise?

Theirs was a secret sin, but not for long. In today's gospel, we're told that our Lord rebuked them for it. Jesus is the one who brings to light our secret sins. The attitude of James and John was simply the default presupposition of their culture – indeed, of every culture! The force of custom is one big reason for secret sins. Even very religious people can be swayed by the mentality of their age. But our Lord's gospel was more than counter-cultural, it seemed to contradict reason itself. Instead of thwarting logic, however, the gospel actually transcends it. The Christian lifestyle is, for this reason, an enigma – with a capital "E." Living out this mystery demands constant introspection. Another reason for secret sins is the force of habit. When we first omit our daily prayers or decisive good deeds we are immediately troubled within. Soon, however, the voice of conscience is silenced. Habit has turned our overt sin into a covert one.

Another source of secret sins is the ordeal that self-knowledge demands of us. Our examinations of conscience can quickly take us out of our comfort zone. So, instead of "Know thyself," our motto becomes, "Ignorance is bliss." Another cause of secret sins is – believe it or not – a carefree lifestyle. It is easy for our vices to remain hidden so long as we are not put to the test. In this sense, poor physical or mental health can actually

be a blessing in disguise because illness can bring to light vices that have remained hidden our whole life long. So true is this that saints, like today's St. Vincent de Paul, were never content with the personal troubles that life afforded them. On the contrary, they made everyone else's problems their own. Tried in this way, they became the masters of self-knowledge. And they didn't like what they saw! The paradox concerning knowledge in general is doubly true of self-knowledge: The better you know yourself, the better you realize how little you truly know yourself.

Unjust laws are another source of secret sins. Even flagrant offenses, like abortion, can be cunningly camouflaged when they're enshrined in civil law as human rights. Another source of secret sins is the interior blindness caused by vices like pride and ingratitude. But the greatest cause of secret sins is ignorance of our Lord's gospel message. In His day, many expected a savior, but few expected Him to save them from sin. Most presumed the Messiah would deliver them from the Romans. Our Lord fearlessly ignored this public expectation. Although rejected for doing so, He thereby turned our attention to the subtlest sin of them all – the original sin, which we merely inherit. True, its commission was already revealed in the Old Testament account of Adam and Eve, but the Jews themselves didn't understand the deeper significance of this event. If our Lord Jesus Christ can bring mankind's top secret sin to light, He can also uncover the secret sins which we ourselves commit, however so routinely or inadvertently! Lord Jesus, we implore You! Save us from our secret sins! Amen!

2016.09.29

(Jn1:47-51) In today's gospel, Nathanael, also known as Bartholomew, becomes the first one among the apostles to explicitly confess that Jesus is both Messiah and Son of God. Here, we're at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Peter's famous declaration of faith would come much later, but also carried more weight since it followed the crisis of faith prompted by our Lord's insistence that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Although the two had never met, our Lord greeted Nathanael as if they were well acquainted. He said, "Behold a true child of Israel, in whom there is no duplicity." Rather than dodging the compliment, Nathanael – true to our Lord's assessment of him – takes no notice of it. Instead, he goes right to the heart of the matter. "How do you know me?" he asks. And now follows the revelation that so startled Nathanael, yet is mostly lost on the rest of us: "Before Philip called you," said our Lord, "I saw you under the fig tree."

Nathanael's stay under the fig tree, to which our Lord referred, must not have been recent. At that time, the Passover was only a few weeks away and the fig trees were not yet in leaf. So there would be no reason – be it fruit or shade – to loiter under one.

Whenever the incident did take place, Nathanael must have been pondering some crucial dilemma or riddle. Our Lord clearly read his heart. While Nathanael is the first to call Jesus Son of God, our Lord responds by calling Himself the Son of Man for the first time. Prefacing His reply with a double amen, our Lord says, "You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Our Lord is called the Son of Man 81 times in the Gospels. It's His favorite title for Himself. What's most remarkable, however, is that it's only found on our Lord's lips – most solemnly when He was bound under oath by Caiphas to say who He was. The proto-martyr, St. Stephen, does use the title once in Acts, but only when alluding to this solemn oath taken by our Lord. With this one exception, no other disciple, evangelist or early Christian writer calls Jesus the Son of Man! We prefer Son of God, but He prefers Son of Man. Some commentators attribute this difference in usage to a difference in perspective. What is most remarkable for us is that Jesus is God. What is most remarkable for God, however, is that He became a man.

In our Lord's time, the term, Son of Man, wasn't used as a title for the Messiah. Nevertheless, it did lead a thinking mind to a vision from the Book of Daniel (that was recounted in today's first reading). We needn't look any further! This vision is the source from which our Lord appropriated His favorite title for Himself. Therein, Daniel saw, "one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven...He received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away; his kingship shall not be destroyed." Several points are worth noting. Although he is human – after all, that's what the expression Son of Man means – this prophesied Messiah king comes from heaven on the clouds. He doesn't come to power by wielding the sword. Dominion is simply given to him by God. Moreover, since his kingdom is everlasting, it cannot be of this world. Needless to say, all this was marvelously fulfilled in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In today's gospel, we learn that our Lord's peaceful conquest of the world would profoundly involve the angels. These heavenly hosts more than supply for the lack of earthly armies. Instead of weapons, they wield actual graces. Although there are myriads of them, we only know three of them by name – Sts. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, archangels of God! Watch over us always – but especially on this day which we celebrate in your honor! Amen!