

24TH SUNDAY – ORD. (A)

REMEMBER DEATH AND DECAY, AND CEASE FROM SIN

September 16/17, 2023

Whatever we do can be good or evil. There is no middle way or neutral behavior. And whatever we do may have a good or bad effect on our neighbor, because we do not live in isolation. Whatever we do also brings in positive or negative results. The book of Sirach throws light on this.

“The vengeful will suffer the Lord’s vengeance, for He remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then when you pray, your sins will be forgiven”. He continues that if we refuse mercy to another, we cannot seek pardon for our own sins, and we cannot find healing when we nourish anger against our brother. Jesus explains further what Sirach is saying.

In response to Peter’s question how many times to forgive wrongdoing, Jesus told him that one should forgive sins not seven times but every day and throughout his life. The parable explains the consequences of our actions when we fail to treat our brothers with mercy. Forgiveness of sins is a mandatory requirement of living a good Christian life. That is why in the “Our Father”, we pray to God to forgive our trespasses as we forgive others. So, if I don’t forgive and I pray this prayer, then I am deceiving myself and lying to God. He forgives every day, and He wants us to do the same.

Whether I live or die I belong to Him so I cannot isolate myself from Him and do whatever I want. It is sin that will separate me from God and so I have to avoid sin. Today, the sin I am called to work on is wrath and anger, mercilessness and unforgiving.

Is it difficult for me to forgive and show mercy? If yes, then why? It may be due to pride, or a feeling that it is justifiable, or angry because of what happened, or want to pay back, or show power for the person to know that I am not ‘soft’ or does not deserve to be forgiven. But sometimes it is good to be angry in order to put things right, that was why Jesus drove away the moneychangers in the Temple (Mk.11:15-17). The other servants and the master were also angry with the wicked servant because he did not show

mercy. Therefore, it is important to frown on injustice, cheating, corruption, immorality, selfishness, greed and other vices. We should not condone and connive with wrong-doing and evil.

All the same, there is the need always to forgive and reconcile. We are to leave everything in the hands of the Lord, as St. Paul told the Romans: “Never pay back evil with evil...Never try to get revenge; leave that, my dear friends, to the Retribution. As scripture says, vengeance is mine – I will pay back, the Lord promises” (Rom.12:17-19). St. Peter also told the early believers: “Never pay one wrong with another, or one abusive word with another; instead, repay with a blessing” (1Pet.3:9).

How do I react to unpleasant situations? Who are those difficult to deal with? I should not forget that my anger and outburst can lead me to do certain things which I will regret later. It is important for me to remember that death and decay await me, and it is my good life that will make my corruptible body become incorruptible.

Thus, I have to be patient with everyone and in all circumstances. I have to learn to control myself and be very slow to act or react when something happens. If I want God to forgive me to the end, then I have to forgive others. Do I want God to love me to the end? Then I have to love others. Do I want God to be kind to me? Then I have to show kindness. In any case, God is always good and even though I may not love Him, He always loves me, and He wants me to learn from Him. If I know that there is death and decay, then I should set enmity aside and cease from sin. I will stand before the Lord one day to give account of what I have done, good or bad, (2Cor.5:10).