

Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time: Some Aphorisms of the Lord

This is the Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Usually, Lent would have begun by now, but this year it is late. Also, when we return to ordinary time in June, we usually begin with the 9th or 10th Sunday of the year, so poor number 8 rarely is celebrated.

The readings for today are full of aphorisms. An aphorism is an adage, or a tersely phrased statement of the truth. Let's look at three of the aphorisms found in the Gospel of Luke.

"Can a blind man act as a guide to a blind man. Will they not both fall into a ditch?"

People cannot teach until they have learned. This is true in every aspect of life, but particularly in the Church. In the Catholic Church we are blessed with a teaching authority. This authority is often given the Latin word for teacher and called the *Magisterium*. The magisterium consists in the Pope, the Bishops, theologians and consultants. The duty of the magisterium is to set the course for us to relate our faith and morals to the evolving times. We take this for granted because most of us have always been Catholic and have always had the body of our faith presented in a rather neat package. But dogmatic statements didn't just happen. They evolved over many centuries as the Church continues to grow in its understanding of itself.

The magisterium does not just exist among the hierarchy. It also exists in the home among the confirmed. Those who have received the sacrament of confirmation have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to grow in their understanding of the faith. When, as all human beings, we have times of doubt, or times that we have difficulty understanding what we believe or why we believe, we have to go to books and knowledgeable people in the area. We also have to go to our knees and pray to Holy Spirit to help us grow in faith. The blind cannot lead the blind. That is why we have been gifted with the Holy Spirit. That is why we have the magisterium.

"Why look at the speck in your brother's eye when you miss the plank in your own?"

Psychologist might restate this second aphorism in these terms: we tend to transfer our irritation over our own failings to others. So we decry another person's faults as a way of hiding our own. The Lord was quite a psychologist when he said, "First deal with your own faults." When we go through those negative days when everything other people do irritates us, we have to take a step back and consider what we are doing that upsets others, and, even more, what we are doing that upsets ourselves.

"A good tree does not produce decayed fruit anymore than a decayed tree produces good fruit. Each tree is known by its yield."

The final aphorism is that each tree is known by its fruit. When a person does good things, we know this is a good person. When a person is continually stirring up trouble, we know that this person is troubled. The fruit reveals the person. In the same way, it is not enough for us to say we are saved and then live as pagans. In fact, it is not enough to say we are saved. What we need to say is that we are being saved, in the process of being saved. Our actions must reflect God's gift to us. If they don't, then we are in fact rejecting his salvation. Yes, we always depend upon the mercy of God, but we have to respond to this mercy by doing our best to live the Christian life. If we don't then our fruits, our actions will demonstrate the insincerity of our conversion.

This Wednesday Lent begins. I need this Lent. Perhaps you do too. Lent is a time for us to grow in our faith life, let the magisterium and Holy Spirit guide us. Lent is a time for us to look into ourselves. How is the upset we have with others a reflection of our own faults? Lent is a time to consider our living of the Christian life. Do our actions demonstrate Christ's continuing conversion in our lives?

May you and I allow God to take control of every aspect of our lives.