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Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time - 2 March 2025

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2 March 2025

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

Our readings are wisdom texts, collections of wise sayings that are short, to the point and meant to be pondered. They are also meant to match life experience and shape future behaviour. We are challenged by their sagacity, yet also intrigued as to whether these same things are all that would be said to us today.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you conquered death and so it has no more sting. Lord, have mercy.

You are the light of the world. Christ, have mercy.

You teach us to speak truly of God. Lord, have mercy.

Collect

*Grant to us, O Lord, we pray,
that the course of our world
may be directed by your peaceful rule
and that your church may rejoice,
untroubled in her devotion.*

Behind this prayer is quite a story. The ancient collect was written by Pope Vigilius (pope 537-555) for the papal Mass of Sunday 14 February 538. The siege of Rome by Witiges, king of the Arian Ostrogoths, was continuing, and an uneasy truce had been broken three times in the previous month. Not only was the siege threatening the city, but it also was disrupting the Lenten fast and the preparation of the community for the celebration of Easter.

In its original setting the sense is that the Church's worship and devotion is tranquil and untroubled when the world is at peace, established in righteousness, and freed from sin and death. Civil unrest disturbs worship and devotion and interrupts the Church's praise. The Church is able to rejoice in worship that mirrors God's own creative and restorative tranquillity and rejoicing when there is peace in the course of worldly events. While including righteousness, the Missal tradition also understands this peace in terms of Christ's mercy, his salvation for all in need, and in terms of justice.

Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Sirach 27:4-7

This Sunday's First Reading is part of larger meditation, warning the reader about sinful persons. Using a number of different metaphors, Ben Sirach warns how the deeds of the sinful person will always be shown out.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 92:2-3; 13-14; 15-16

Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Understood as one person's prayer of thanksgiving, this psalm invites others to join in praise and thanksgiving. The righteous, who do indeed give thanks, receive the rewards of their righteousness.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

'Death, where is your sting?' – perhaps one of Paul's more famous quotes – points to the reality of our new life in Christ: death is swallowed up in Christ's victory over death.

Gospel Reading

Luke 6:39-45

In this Sunday's Gospel, we read a further section of the Sermon on the Plain. Here, Jesus uses the analogy of trees and fruit to highlight that the inner disposition of a person will be shown in their words and actions: good comes from good; bad from bad.

Reflection

This Sunday's short first reading comes from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, sometimes known as Sirach, because it was written by Ben Sirach the Wise. These brief four verses concern speech, a common theme in Wisdom literature, and indeed a problem known to peoples of all times and places: words or language can be the worst of things or the best of things.

Ben Sirach certainly knew this. He knew human speech to be the best of things: able to praise God and build others up. Yet he is also acquainted with the vagaries of human speech and, in many and varied places in his reflections, denounces all the

sins of speech: lies and gossip, thoughtless swearing, quarrels, and most of all, hypocrisy.

And yet, human speech has a power that can never be resisted for too long. Eventually, it will return to its proper use. Sooner or later, those who attempt to use speech to hide their thoughts or deceive others will be caught out in the snare of speech. They are unmasked by the very words they try to hide behind. And in this, we see the real measure of a person. We are not deceived by the golden-tongued lies of the liar: Do not praise a person before they have spoken, since this is the test of them.

Lest we think Ben Sirach's reflections are of little importance, it is good for us to remember that the act of speaking enjoys a privileged place in the pages of Sacred Scripture: God speaks...and the world comes into being. Unlike the dumb idols of the pagans, the words spoken by God are creative, bringing into being our world and all that is in it. Created in the image of God, we humans are gifted with speech. Despite the evil use we may make of it, speech retains the imprint of its divine origin. And so, speech will ultimately reveal the truth, whether we like it or not.

The section of Luke's Sermon on the Plain which we read this Sunday begins with a condemnation of those who seek to guide others: the blind cannot lead the blind! Jesus challenges his disciples to be fully trained like their master. When we look to Jesus as our Master, the example he gives to us is more than clear.

Then, using trees and fruit as an analogy, Jesus picks up this theme of the outward showing or even betraying what is going on deep inside of a person. Those who listened to Jesus for the first time would have been familiar with fruit trees growing wild in the countryside and also those under cultivation. If a tree is good and healthy, so will be its fruit. The converse is also true: rotten trees produce rotten fruit. To avoid the hypocrisy of which Jesus is so critical in this Gospel Reading, the intentions of our heart must be free of double-dealing and deceit.

Here, young children give us a good example. Often, in all innocence, a young child will speak the truth about another person or a situation, sometimes much to their parents' embarrassment or the discomfort of others. We might say that their filter is not turned on. The truth is a young child has yet to learn how to use language to dissemble or hide or lie. Sometimes those living with dementia have the same brutal honesty. The filters they once learned to use to hide behind or cover-up are now long gone. They speak the truth, however untimely or unpalatable it might be.

As disciples, we are called and challenged to be fully trained after the example of our Master, Jesus: free from hypocrisy, with child-like (not childish) simplicity and honesty in our dealings with others.

This Sunday, we stand on the threshold of Lent. A journey which asks us and challenges us to be free of hypocrisy and deceit. A journey which calls us once more to peel away the layers which encrust our hearts, so that they may be broken open once more to know the tender compassion of our God.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist proclaims that it is good to give thanks to God. We offer the needs of our community and our world in the knowledge that God hears our prayer.

Petitions

Let us pray for our Church, Pope Francis and all leaders throughout the world. May they always speak the truth and lead by witnessing to Jesus' words.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for world leaders. In this era of misinformation and abandonment of the truth, may the leaders of nations be drawn into the power of truth.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for all those who become ill and disoriented through the use of social media. May they be guided towards the truth that comes from God and not misled by the promises and despair of what they absorb through social media.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for all those who spread the gospel throughout the world. May their efforts be fruitful and supported by our community.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who are suffering because of violent conflict throughout the world. May the Spirit of truth prevail so that reconciliation and peace become a reality.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who have died to whom Truth has now been revealed. We also pray for those who mourn that they will know the truth of the eternal love of God.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of Truth, we bring these needs to you with the faith filled understanding that you will provide all that we need. We make our prayer in Jesus' name through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C (2 March 2025)

Title	AOV	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
All creatures of our God and king				618	446	395
Alleluia! sing to Jesus	191			619	449	371
As we gather at your table					451	
Be thou my vision	9				455	
By your kingly power, O risen Lord				633	352	352
Centre of my life		170				444
Deliver us, O Lord of truth					480	
Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us				730	530	391
Make me a channel of your peace		126		793	555	490
Now thank we all our God				755	561	425
O God, our help in ages past	175			767	568	459
O God, refine our faith					569	
O God, you search me and you know me					572	
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven	78			789	588	392
Praise the Lord, you heavens, adore him				790	583	409
Praise to the Lord, the almighty		132		792	586	421
Seek ye first the kingdom of God	48				594	456
Sing alleluia			74			
The Hound of Heaven				795	505	81

Title	S&S2
Purify my heart	307

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 91: *Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.*

	CWB	GA	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 91	372	54	pg. 66	pg. 104