

VIII SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – “C”– (*Sir. 27:4-7; 1 Cor. 15:54-58; Lk 6:39-45*)

I was shocked, confused, bewildered, as I entered Heaven’s door, not by the beauty of it all, nor the lights or its decor. But it was the folks in Heaven Who made me sputter and gasp– The thieves, the liars, the sinners, The alcoholics and the trash. I nudged Jesus, ‘What’s the deal? I would love to hear Your talk. How’d all these sinners get up here? God must’ve made a mistake. ‘And why’s everyone so quiet, so somber – give me a clue.’ ‘Hush, child,’ He said, ‘they’re all in shock. No one thought they’d be seeing you.’

It’s very easy to find fault with things and people. No matter how good a person or a thing may be, it is easy to find some fault with them. And while it is easy to find faults in others, it is just as easy to overlook our own faults – just like the person in the story.

Jesus calls hypocrites, those who notice a tiny splinter in others but are blind to the plank in them. They are unaware of their shortcomings while they decry the faults of others. These people are often negative and hostile. They have the habit of focusing on the bad side of everything especially the bad side of people. They are prone to criticize and find fault, may be because they are looking for a person without blemish. But, we are sorry, “He who would find a friend without fault will never find him.” The reason is simple: there is no one without fault and there is no ideal man, only real person. The appealing thing about faultfinding in others is that it takes the focus off our own deficiencies and helps us to feel ever so self-righteous. It’s good to criticize others than we being criticized; there is no obligation on our part. It hurts us.

Instead of criticizing others, why not caring for them? If we care for them, we will listen not only to what they are saying but also to what they are trying to say with or without words. If we care for them we won’t impose our views, our plans, ideas, discipline, advice, correction, guidance and our judgment. If we care for them, we won’t jump at every opportunity to point out others’ blunders to make them feel foolish... If we care for them we will show them how talented, capable, industrious, genuine, original, creative, skilled, friendly, trustworthy, resourceful, good and lovable persons they are.

Instead of criticizing others, why not we try to know ourselves?

How?

There are three ways:

First, we can know ourselves by what we do. We are identified by our work. But that is not always a good way to know ourselves. When we do nothing, e.g. sick persons who are bed-ridden cannot do anything, are they nothing? So, we do not judge ourselves simply by what we do.

Second, we can be known by what we say. But there are times that we are careful with our words because we don't like to hurt or make enemies. We are very careful with our words because we don't like to lose our friends.

Third, we can be known by what we think. Because we do things according to what we think is right. We do not judge ourselves in terms of what we do, neither in terms of what we say, but in terms of what we think because no one censors, the way we think. We think according to our pleasure. For example: It is very easy to be good inside the church, but when we see someone who does not fall in line or hear a baby crying or a child running to and fro inside the church, an urge to hit these undisciplined brats is very much in us. And so we can know ourselves in the way we think and in the way we react to a given stimulus or situation.

That's why in our gospel today, Jesus asks us to search as carefully as possible for our own faults as we do for the faults of others. Because when we are aware of our own weaknesses and strive to overcome them, knowing that we have also faults we are slow to judge and swift to give the benefit of the doubt. The Greek philosopher Socrates says that nature has given us two ears, two eyes and only one tongue so that we should hear more than we speak.

It can come only with the grace of God and as a result of much work and effort. But this is precisely the challenge of today's gospel for each one of us. To be so positive of all other people that we can accept them for who and what they are, that we can overcome those occasions when we tend to misjudge others, that we can stress the good in others and hope they can do the same for us.