

2014

- Our first reading from Ezekiel today is one particularly for us priests and deacons...who entrusted with being those “watchmen”, or sentinels, for God’s people..
- The true shepherd of His flock constantly asks himself: “*Am I being faithful to God, or bowing to the crowd...or to my own opinions? Am I worried more about “upsetting” someone than preaching the truth?*”
- Those entrusted with God’s people must always be ready to guide them along God’s path, and away from the things that are not of God.
- That very often means rejecting the trends of common culture and modern ideas. God will not judge anyone on how stylish or trendy he is, but only on whether he has been faithful to His Word, Jesus Christ.
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- Furthermore, you parents have that responsibility even more so, for you shepherd your own little flock much more than we priests and deacons and catechists ever can...influencing your children daily.
- What they see in you will be echoed more-or-less throughout their lives. In many ways, they will become you...and thus you must become what you want them to be.
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- And we all influence one another. By our deeds in life, we become “shepherds” to all of those around us.
- You’ve seen commercials on TV about how one person sees a good deed, and that sparks another good deed, etc.
- Well...that works. Not always, of course...but the more good deeds witnessed, the greater influence they have upon a person.
- And those who practice charity find, as Jesus said: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive,*” and they find that there is much greater joy in giving than in receiving.”
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- Yes, there are the stubborn sheep who refuse to do good, preferring selfishness and self-interest over all else.
- And, sadly, Jesus warns us that many will take that easy and seductive path that leads to destruction rather than the more difficult path that leads to life.
- Many parents must suffer seeing this in their grown children.
- But we are called to warn those around us of the inevitable fate that follows the rejection of God and His Word...not out of self-righteousness, but out of love.
- It is not charity to watch someone walking toward a cliff without calling out a warning?
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- *“Oh Father...but I’m afraid they won’t like me anymore!”*
- Well...do you love them or not?...and is not “love” to seek the best for the beloved?
- Which is the greater love?—to point out to the sinner his error, risking loss of affection in hope of his repentance and salvation... or to say nothing, concerned only for absence of conflict or “peace in the family”...and watch them march off of that cliff with blinders intact?
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- And, what’s more...who is worthy of our greatest love? Is it not God...our Creator and Father and salvation? Will we watch those whom HE loves march off the cliff with nary a word? Is that love?
- The people of Nazareth—Jesus’ lifelong friends and acquaintances—wanted to throw Him off a cliff...but He preached truth and repentance anyway...just as we, His disciples, should do.
- Always God first and foremost. The great commandments: Love God above all else, and your neighbor as yourself, are in that order for a reason.
- Yes, be gentle and tactful...seeking to sway rather than to scold or nag...and trying not to break the bruised reed or quenching the smoldering wick...but in the end, we must always choose Christ.

- *“But they’ll accuse me of judging them!”*
- You’re not judging them (which only God can do). We cannot judge the soul, but we can judge many actions.
- Some things by God’s word are sinful always and everywhere ... adultery, fornication, abusing others, using God’s name in vain, etc.
- And St. Paul specifically tells us: *“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life!”* (1Co 6:2-3 RSV)
- And we also remember St. James: *“My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”* (James 5:19-1 RSV)

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- So pray especially for the Pope and the bishops, who have that truly awesome responsibility of shepherding the entire Church... every decision accountable to God.
 - Always in their ears those words of Ezekiel: *“...if you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way...I will hold YOU responsible for his death.”*
 - But remember Jesus’ guarantee that the Holy Spirit will lead His Church.
 - It would be much easier for the Church to go along with the world...bypassing all mention of sin and issues that make people uncomfortable—homosexuality, abortion, sex outside of marriage, divorce and remarriage outside of the Church, birth control, etc.
 - But to do so would be to shirk her duty, and would be preaching to the whims of culture...which Jesus certainly did not do.
 - Yes, love is the fulfillment of the law, as Paul tells us today; but true love--love of God always first.

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- And as St. John tells us: *“This is the love of God...that we keep His commandments”*...the commandments He gives us...not arbitrarily, but for our good.
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- The common theme of our day—often by people justifying their own actions contrary to the teaching of God—is that Jesus accepts everyone...which He does.
 - But He doesn't accept every behavior, and exhorts his hearers to repentance always. He forgave the adulterous woman...but warns her: *“Do not sin again.”*
 - Yes, we may fall...but always we must have the intent to reject what is sinful, confess, and seek once again to be faithful to God in our lives.
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 - Finally, Jesus tells us in the Gospel today the absolute earthly teacher of mankind is His Church—the final earthly judge—given the power of binding and loosing.
 - So learn what the Church teaches, and learn WHY she teaches what she teaches—especially those things which you may not understand or have difficulties with.
 - People often say: “I don't believe what the Church teaches on this or that”...most often on things concerning marriage or sexuality.
 - But have you investigated why the Church teaches what she does?
 - Because everything of the Church is based on the teaching of Christ...with that infallible guidance of the Spirit Christ promised to the Church as a whole, not to us individually. As individuals, we are easily swayed and fall into error.
 - And what did Christ proclaim? ... *“He who hears you [the apostles—the Church] hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”* (Luk 10:16)
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 - So let us not only hear and accept...but embrace with all our strength the teaching of Christ and His Church...knowing that

through her and with her, God gives us the words--and the promise--of eternal life.

Reading 1

[Ez 33:7-9](#)

Thus says the LORD:

You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel;
when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me.

If I tell the wicked, “O wicked one, you shall surely die,”
and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way,
the wicked shall die for his guilt,

but I will hold you responsible for his death.

But if you warn the wicked,
trying to turn him from his way,
and he refuses to turn from his way,
he shall die for his guilt,
but you shall save yourself.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,

and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading II

[Rom 13:8-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another;

for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery;
you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,”
and whatever other commandment there may be,

are summed up in this saying, namely,

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Love does no evil to the neighbor;

hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Gospel

[Mt 18:15-20](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“If your brother sins against you,
go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.

If he does not listen,

take one or two others along with you,

so that ‘every fact may be established

on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.

If he refuses to listen even to the church,

then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.

Amen, I say to you,

whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again, amen, I say to you,

if two of you agree on earth

about anything for which they are to pray,

it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name,

there am I in the midst of them.”