

2017

- This Gospel today speaks to the challenges of being a Christian... and, in our modern world, especially a Catholic...because our faith often comes under attack by those espousing the values of modern culture.
- That's always been the case, really. Even in the story of Adam and Eve, we are given a first glimpse of the struggle between good and evil, the spirit and the flesh, obedience to God and rebellion.
- As St. Paul writes: “...*the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other...*” (Galatians 5:17)...the Spirit leading to charity, obedience and virtue...the desires of the flesh leading to selfishness, disobedience and vice, or sin.
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- And what is sin?...that bugaboo word that even Christians in our day and age disdain? Even many Christian denominations teach that we need not worry about sin if only we have “faith”.
- But what is faith? A true faith not only believes, but acts. As James says: “Faith without works is dead.”
- And there are numerous times Jesus Himself insists on obedience, as when He says: “*You are my friends IF you do what I command you.*” (John 15:14)
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- Sin: A short sharp word which is even often ridiculed nowadays, but certainly was not by Jesus or the apostles.
- For is not sin a purposeful departure from the will and teaching of God, and therefore from the absolute Good?...being more or less serious depending upon the nature and gravity of the disobedience.
- Sometimes we hear: “The guilt that you Catholics put in people by warning about sin is not healthy!”

- But it is not the guilt that is unhealthy; it is the sin which is unhealthy...and spiritually destructive.
- Guilt and shame are simply the goads of conscience calling us away from doing the wrong. Guilt and shame should not be rejected, but listened to and heeded.
- Depart from wrongdoing—depart from sin —and the feelings and oppression of guilt and shame vanish.
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- But this, of course, requires self-discipline. Self-control. Self-mastery. And more and more in our world we just don't like that... as our culture draws further away from God and His commandments...just as Jesus said it would, by the way.
- And, of course, understanding of what God calls us to do--and not to do--is essential
- For He gives ample grace for self-mastery, and gives us the ultimate example in Christ. As St. Paul assures us in that passage I often quote: *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- What is that “way of escape”? Getting up from the computer when tempted to click on porn. Opting out of the lunch “meeting” with that attractive co-worker. Killing the sin before it grows.
- As St. James writes: *“God cannot be tempted with evil and He himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.”* (James 1:13-15)

- And perhaps most important of all...remember humility...reject narcissistic tendencies of self-glorification and hedonism.
- Remembering that if God Himself comes down and is born in a stable, works as a common laborer, and dies on a cross, then we ought have no desire of earthly glory for ourselves.
- And, given God's grace for self-control, truly the Christian can say the words of that poem *Invictus*:

I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul.

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- Finally, the Christian is called to conquer his fear of being disliked or challenged...even from family members. We must always take our stand with Christ.
 - This is the primary message of our Gospel today when Jesus says: "*Whoever loves father or mother...son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me...*" And thus we cannot let even our closest earthly relationships get between us and God.
 - And this means that painful exercise of pointing out sin in others when they endanger their souls...for true love points out danger.
 - "You're judging me!" they may say in order to deflect criticism.
 - And you may respond: "No, what you're doing is objectively sinful by the Word of God...and my love for you compels me to point out that you are endangering your soul."
 - Because if you don't tell them, perhaps no one else will...and then they will become complacent, and yet still responsible for their action, as you are responsible for your inaction.
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 - And so our choice is, really: Love God and the person though it may risk your relationship...or don't love God or the person

enough to inform him of the danger in which he places his soul.
Just to have good relations...nice holiday dinners together.

- So take courage. Yes, it can be tough; we always fear and worry about the loss of someone's love and affection.
- But one of the spiritual works of mercy is “admonishing the sinner”—kindly, patiently, tactfully, and always in charity.
- Yet remember we must remove the beam from our own eye first so that we see to help our brother, and not simply be seen as a hypocrite.
- But God will be with you; you will be doing nothing wrong, but rather exercising that same charity—that same true love—as the prophets, as John the Baptist, as the apostles, and as Jesus Himself...for their salvation may depend upon it.

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 97

Reading 12 [KGS 4:8-11, 14-16A](#)

One day Elisha came to Shunem,
where there was a woman of influence, who urged him to dine with her.
Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine.
So she said to her husband, "I know that Elisha is a holy man of God.
Since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room on the roof
and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp,
so that when he comes to us he can stay there."
Sometime later Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight.

Later Elisha asked, "Can something be done for her?"
His servant Gehazi answered, "Yes!
She has no son, and her husband is getting on in years."
Elisha said, "Call her."
When the woman had been called and stood at the door,
Elisha promised, "This time next year
you will be fondling a baby son."

Responsorial Psalm [PS 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19](#)

R. (2a) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
The promises of the LORD I will sing forever,
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever;"
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.
R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;
in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk.
At your name they rejoice all the day,
and through your justice they are exalted.
R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
You are the splendor of their strength,
and by your favor our horn is exalted.
For to the LORD belongs our shield,
and the Holy One of Israel, our king.
R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Reading 2 [ROM 6:3-4, 8-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:
Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into his death?
We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.

If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.
As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;
as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Alleluia¹ PT 2:9

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;
announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel^{MT} 10:37-42

Jesus said to his apostles:

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;
and whoever does not take up his cross
and follow after me is not worthy of me.
Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

"Whoever receives you receives me,
and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.
Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet
will receive a prophet's reward,
and whoever receives a righteous man
because he is a righteous man
will receive a righteous man's reward.
And whoever gives only a cup of cold water
to one of these little ones to drink
because the little one is a disciple—
amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."