

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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Today's Gospel helps us to explore how to attain more joy and the way to reach heaven by doing one thing in our life; to correct the wrongs in our life in order to produce good fruits.

In the First Reading, from the book of Sirach, we heard: "its fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree; so a person's speech discloses the cultivation of the mind."(Sirach 27:6) The words that we use in our interactions with others should come out from our own good will, and to help others to have a fruitful and salvific life. To have and maintain a good relationship with everyone, Jesus asks us to extend our intentions and our actions for the benefit and the good of everyone.

Through his Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul similarly encourages us to always devote our time and efforts to the work of the Lord. The moment we strive to produce good fruits in our life, we start doing the work of the Lord. The main thing that enables us to produce good fruits is through a sincere seeking and being in an intimate relationship with God. This intimacy is expressed in the Gospel according to St. John 15:5: "I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit."

What are the fruits that we should produce? This is described in St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (5:22-23): "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." What hinders us from producing these good fruits, as we understand it from the Gospel, is that we tend to see other people's sin far more readily than we see our own. Jesus says that we need to be careful in our self-righteousness and to look at our own actions and motivations before we start trying to fix other people. The more critical our attitude is toward others, the more we will be blind to our own faults.

Jesus is not saying that we should never seek to confront sin within another person or to help people to combat sin in their lives. Dealing with others' sin requires gentleness and care. Each interaction should be caring and compassionate, and not merely as a task to find the wrong in others. The approach needs to be motivated by care and love for the other person. We need to be gentle and to seek to help, rather than to hurt.

Recently, I read a relevant, eye-opening statement: "don't put your finger on someone's faults unless that finger is part of a helping hand." The first thing Jesus wants from us is to clear our own sight; that is our life before, and consequently, to help others to come out from their own mistakes. As the blind man in the Gospel had asked Jesus, let us also pray to Jesus and ask: "I want to see" in order to help ourselves, to help others, and to bear good fruits in our life.

