

REFLECTION FOR THE 8TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

We all have a certain tendency to make judgments about people we meet. We are struck by a first impression, by a gesture, the way a person looks or dresses, by their physical appearance, by the immediate sympathy they inspire in us, perhaps even by our inner disposition at the time. Then we evaluate everything, classify the person, put a label on them, decide whether or not they interest us, whether or not we trust them, whether or not we want to deepen ties with them, whether or not we let them into the circle of our relationships.

It is possible that our “assessment” is often objective and fair; but it is also possible that sometimes our “assessment” is prejudiced, unfair, and superficial. This naturally leads us to think about the criteria we use to evaluate the people who cross our path. What are these criteria? What decides whether we accept or refuse to welcome the people that life brings our way? Do we look for “the truth” of people beyond appearances, or do we decide the “worth” of people based on superficial aspects and impressions?

On the other hand, we are often forced to discern whether we can trust certain people and entrust them with certain responsibilities. All people have their value and must be respected in their dignity; but each person has their own way of being, their own characteristics, their own way of looking at life, at the world and at other men and women. Before choosing a person to entrust with a particular task, we need to get to know them, to know the values they hold dear, the personal characteristics that make them suitable for a particular role, and whether they are worthy of our trust. How can we make this discernment?

In the first reading from the book of Sirach, gives us a “tip” that is the fruit of his experience as a “wise” man: listen carefully to what the person in question says, the opinions they express, the values that come through in their words. The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. Eventually, the words someone says end up revealing the truth of their life. Do we try to listen patiently and without prejudice to the people who talk to us? Do we try to maintain an honest, truthful, and attentive dialog with the people we want to get to know well?

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us to be careful with our judgments. Sometimes we can be “blind guides,” seeing faults in others but not realizing our own. We have to avoid prejudices, primary judgments of others, but look at our brother or sister with the eyes of Jesus, with attention, with charity. If we have a good heart, we will also judge our brother with kindness, whereas if we allow ourselves to be carried away

by our passions, our personal interests, then we become suspicious, always criticizing others, seeing faults in everyone, without noticing our own shortcomings. Let us judge others by their fruits, by their works, and above all with a kind heart like that of Jesus.

In the second reading, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds us that our goal is eternal life. Christ has already conquered death and we must live aware that the end of our lives is that *“the perishable [body] puts on the imperishable, and the mortal [body] puts on immortality.”* For this reason, St. Paul says: *“thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labour is not in vain.”*

May the Lord be our guide and make us have a pure and loving gaze like his. May our works bear witness to our faith in Jesus Christ, with a life guided by the values he taught us: truth, peace, justice, forgiveness, mercy, and love.

Amen.