

Homily for the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time

March 2-3, 2019

Readings: Sirach 27:4-7; 1 Corinthians 15: 54-58; Luke 6: 39-45

Preacher: Sr. Karen Dietz

As I write this, I am at our Motherhouse recovering from rotator cuff surgery on my right shoulder (my dominant hand). The preparation for this surgery and the subsequent recovery have been teaching me some new (or renewed) lessons about life in community, which is a parallel to the Christian life.

I did a lot of research and preparation for this surgery, including what kinds of bath products and clothes would work best as I worked with an arm that had to be immobilized. I wanted to choose a date for surgery that least impacted my schedule and that of others who might be called upon to assist me. There were specific “two-handed” chores I wanted to accomplish before my surgery so as to not inconvenience too many others. I am grateful this was not an emergency situation and that I did indeed have the time to make as many preparations as I could.

This weekend we are on the edge of Ordinary Time, preparing to jump off into the Lenten Season. We are in the last few weeks of the Winter season and we believe Spring is around the corner. In our world we are daily on edge with the latest news on the political front both domestically and internationally. I believe our Church is in the throes of a radical cleansing deep to our core. It seems we have been sitting on this edge for some time, and the way forward is no clearer.

The Gospel for this weekend offers us some helpful perspective in these areas of our life. We are counseled to, before all else, take a long, loving look at our own lives and our behaviors *before* addressing the behaviors or attitudes or speech of another. Jesus, in one of his most graphic of parables, tells his followers to remove any “wooden beams” from their own eyes before looking for any specks in the eyes of their brothers and sisters. I remember the scene in the 1970s musical *Godspell* where the beam was truly a 2”x4” piece of wood. Imagine even being able to see anything with that in your eye. This was exactly Jesus’ point. Second, Jesus encourages us that when we do speak, our words come from a

place in our hearts that fosters goodness rather than evil. I would encourage us to speak words that lift others up rather than criticize or tear down.

Taking Jesus' message to heart, at this time in our lives and in the Church year, here is what I would offer. First, that we commit to using the Lenten days to focus on going deep into our hearts to that place of goodness and love, even in the face of the evils of our time. This is certainly not to ignore the struggles in our world but rather to widen our perspective and discover the good that God has promised since the beginning of time. I believe thinking and praying in this way will remind us of God's great love for all of creation.

Second, that when we interact with others, we take a prayerful, reflective pause before speaking. This helps us to respond rather than to react, to converse rather than to debate. When we enter into this kind of conversation, we open ourselves to learning more about another perspective, and ultimately about ourselves. This is not easy in our hurried and anxious world, but with God's help, it can happen. Also, no one of us will do this perfectly each time, but upon reflection we will recognize when we have been successful and we will be encouraged to do it again. When we model this way of interacting, others will be encouraged to do the same.

Lastl, that we use the fullness of the Lenten season to join the Catechumens in our Church in this time of Purification and Enlightenment. What I mean by this is that we should utilize every minute of this Lenten season to pray, offer penance and fasting for the good of ourselves and our world. We are living in such a time of turmoil and sadness that only God can bring healing and resurrection. The reality of persistent abuse, lies, distrust, anger and fear in the political and church arenas can be insidious, infecting the ways we interact with family, friends and colleagues. The only way to break this negative cycle is with God. God alone will give us the courage to speak from our hearts words of goodness and praise.