

EIGHTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

February 27, 2022 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: Good and gracious God, thank you for gathering us together to share faith and fellowship. Mold us in the likeness of Christ as witnesses of the Gospel. Strengthen us in the service of others in a world hungering for peace and justice. We ask this through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you in union with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Response to last week's word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: The first reading and the Gospel state that our words and deeds are a window to our soul and character. In the second reading, Paul concludes his discourse on the resurrection.

Let us listen to God's word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the First Reading, the Psalm and the Second Reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Sirach 27:4-7

This reading has four proverbs. In different ways, each of the proverbs states that speech is a sure key to character. By using the image of a "sieve" and the "potter's furnace," the writer suggests that the words a person speaks help the listener to sift through the chaff of outward appearances and first impressions and to arrive at the speaker's true self. Just as an orchard is judged by the quality of its fruit, so a person's words show us what kind of person he or she is.

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 92

This psalm encourages the use of speech to give praise to God.

GOSPEL: Luke 6:39-45

Today's Gospel is a continuation of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. The passage has four short parables. A key to understanding all four parables lies in the message behind the parable about the plank in one's eye. The disciple who admits no personal faults is no better than a blind guide; his influence is useless to others. But if the disciple makes an effort to be like his teacher Jesus, his actions will be beneficial for himself and others. The disciple whose eyes are focused on Jesus is like a healthy fig tree producing good fruit. His words and deeds have integrity which can influence others to be faithful followers of Jesus. Today's first and third readings call us to examine our speech and deeds for they usually reflect what is in our heart.

SECOND READING: 1Cor 15:54-58

Paul concludes his teaching on the resurrection. In and through Jesus' Resurrection, death, sin and the law have been overcome. Death, like a preying viper, has its sting which is sin. It is this venom of sin which destroys life and leads to final death. But Christ has defeated the power of sin and so has taken the sting out of death. This should spur us on to persevere in doing the Lord's work.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 6:39-45

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.

2. In the first reading, our speech is the test of our true nature. What steps do you need take to make your speech more kind/more gracious?

3. Most, if not all of us are blind to our own faults. What can help us to prevent this from happening?

4. Psychologists often say that the attitudes and behaviors we dislike most in others are often present in our own lives, e.g., a very controlling person often criticizes others who are bossy and overbearing. What do you think of this? What are other examples of behaviors that we (or others), may have that we may criticize in others?

5. Name one area of your life that you would like to bear more fruit e.g., you may like to be better at sharing your faith with others. What action do you need to take to help you to be more fruit bearing in the area you named?

6. What is the one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday's Gospel about how a disciple should speak or act?

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestions: "Dear Lord, we profoundly know that you are the potter and we are the clay, help us to reveal your goodness in all we say and do." "Please help us to see our own beams and others' splinters with the compassionate eyes of our hearts."

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Name one way you can act on today's readings. Suggestions: This week, pay particular attention to those attitudes and behaviors you criticize in others

and see if those same traits may be present in your life. Observe the way you talk to others. What might your manner of speech tell others about you?

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION.

FACILITATOR: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray? Suggestion: Pray for those who are mute or have a speech impediment and for those with seeing and hearing handicaps.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Holy God, you have spoken your Word to us in the life, death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me learn from his use of words to remove whatever blinds me or keeps me self-centered and to see as you see in order to produce the fruit of healing and life-giving love that Jesus speaks to us.