

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, February 27, 2022

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

by Dorothy Law Nolte, American Author and Counselor

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, she learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, she learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, she learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, she learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, she learns to like herself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

I am sure we have heard this poem at one time or another, and there is a lot of truth to Mrs. Nolte's poem. It gets us thinking about how we were raised and how we raise our own children. What do our words say about how we were raised? What are our words saying about how our children will grow? What are we nurturing within that will help us to speak God's words to ourselves and to others?

These are great questions for us to ask ourselves as we end this short ordinary time within the Church, and as Lent begins in a few days. Today's selections from the Book of Sirach and Luke's Gospel suggest a powerful standard by which we can judge the heart and mind of another person; how we can judge ourselves, by the words coming forth from our mouths.

Negative people tend to speak negatively. Jealous people speak resentfully. Judgmental people speak suspiciously. Their conversations tend to weigh others down. By contrast, positive people speak positively. Happy people speak graciously. Energized people speak enthusiastically. Their conversations tend to lift others up. Words do say a lot about what is in our hearts and our minds.

I am sure you have also heard that, the eyes are the windows to the soul, and it is true therefore, conversation our words seems to be expressions of the heart. St. Francis de Sales wrote in his book, ***“Introduction to the Devout Life”*** about how we speak. Like, just as physicians learn about a person's health or sickness by looking at the tongue, so our words are a true indication of the state of our souls. When you think about your words in this way, what do our words say about the condition of my/our souls?

What do my words say about how I look at God? What do my words say about how I see others?

My niece had to get on me not long ago for speaking unkindly about a teenager girl driver who darted in front of me. I was very unkind to her by my words. She was right it had nothing to do with her age, or her gender; she was just a bad driver. However my words were uncalled for and it didn't speak to who I am and who I am called to be. I had to repent. Told my niece I was sorry for saying it, sorry she had to hear it. It is all about the power of words that come forth from our mouths this weekend.

We come to the end of Luke's Gospel, on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus addressing his followers with His special teachings that have been hard to hear and even more difficult to follow. However, remember Jesus is the Way. As these teachings might be hard to hear and follow, Jesus does provide the Way to do so. It is all about giving Jesus our hearts and lives. Allowing Him to live within and through us, it is the only way we can live these teachings on Love, as God loves us.

One of the images used in the Gospel today is that of a tree, which needs time to produce good fruit. We all have a lifetime, however long or short, to be like trees planted near running waters that hopefully grow over time. And once those trees establish roots and have a good foundation, then it can last through any season. If we grow in faith and are nourish in the truth, we too have a great foundation to grow. We can withstand any season.

So we have to be people of faith, growing in our relationship with God so we can effectively help others also come to know Jesus. Jesus used the expression, "the blind leading the blind," to explain that the best scenario is that someone who can see is best equipped to lead one who cannot see. This is why we as fathers, and mothers, teachers and coaches, catechists and leaders need to grow in our faith with God so we can be effective guides for others. Our children, our families will not always find it on the internet. I am afraid that is where a lot of them are getting their information these days.

I have explained to some of my family that everything they read is not always true. Everything they hear is not fully true. You have to seek out the truth yourself. God's words challenge us to have a clear vision and to bear good fruit. Jesus indicated that good people produce goodness, which flows from the heart. We speak from what is in our deepest self. In another place in the Gospels, Jesus says that where our treasure is, there our heart will be. What is our treasure?

From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. As we listen to our words what does it reveal about our hearts? As we are united with Jesus, the source of all goodness, here at this altar, let's allow Him to be that life within us. And when we do speak, it will be words that bless the life of others. Children do live what they learn.