

Homily: 14th Sunday: Cycle B: 2021: Ez 2: 2-5; Ps 123; 2 Corth 12: 7-10; Mk 6:1-6

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness”

1. **The Sacrament of Baptism wipes away the original sin:** the state of alienation from God that all human beings are born into. In Baptism we are justified or made right with God in receiving the life of grace which is the seed of eternal life and the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our individual souls, but we still suffer from the effects of original sin: the tendency toward selfishness, the attraction to sin (concupiscence), wanting to be our own boss, pain and suffering of various sorts, weakness and earthly death. **Our life here on earth is a continuous spiritual battle** to allow the new life won for us by Christ on the Cross and given to us in Baptism to win out over the effects of original sin in our being.
2. **We see how this battle is played out in our interior life on a daily basis.** To use one example, let's look at our imagination and distractions. Our **imagination** is effected by original sin and so we are often distracted in our prayer, sometimes by the most trivial and silly things. Don't lose heart or give up: God's power is made perfect in our weakness as we heard in the 2nd reading today. **Being distracted in prayer should lead us to throw ourselves on God's mercy and grace and cry out for His help!** We also need to remind ourselves of the truth that prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit whom we need to rely on more and more to pray better. And to remember that prayer is primarily in the will and the intention, and not to get worked up by distractions and our feelings but to keep praying and gently make an act of Faith, Hope and Love and go back to our prayer. Distractions come from our weakness, sometimes from the devil, but sometimes they do serve a purpose in the Divine plan: *they can show the weaknesses in our souls that may develop into dangerous sins if we let them as well as people and intentions we need to pray for more deeply.* If we become aware of the distractions, in God, we can counter them and grow in the opposite virtue. **What is the nature of the distractions we encounter in prayer?** Are they about **food**- it could lead either to gluttony or the virtue of self-denial. About **anger** - it could lead either to sins of anger or it could lead to deeper patience. About **sexual**

temptations - it could lead to either impurity or to the virtue of chastity - sexual self-control. About **other people** - we could be fighting sins of envy or it could be that God wants us to pray for a certain person or persons more and so lead to charity towards others, which is why God is allowing us to be distracted by images of them during prayer. About **material things** - it could lead to sins of avarice or greed or maybe God is trying to inspire us to be more generous with our material goods. About **pride** of various sorts - that we need to be more humble and to focus on doing God's will instead of our own. About **sloth** - that we need to be more diligent and less lazy in life, spiritual and/or materially. **The key with distractions is noticing a pattern over time: if they are just random thoughts from time to time don't read too much into them just swat them gently away and return to praying; but if you pick up a pattern to distractions it is a good practice to mention them in Confession in order to receive a special grace of healing in that regard. His strength is truly made perfect in weakness.**

3. **Speaking of Confession, what about the struggle we all face to a greater or lesser degree of confessing the same habitual sins?** Could this be another instance of *God's power being made perfect in weakness*? That may seem strange on the surface; after all, doesn't God want us to overcome our sins, not to keep confessing the same things over and over again, year after year? Yes, obviously He wants us to be set free from all sin. But because of the effects of original sin, this is not a process that occurs overnight! We are on the time side of eternity; God is in eternity, so He is working over the long haul to transform us human beings created in His image into His likeness in sanctity: to be holy as He is holy. **Did you ever think of how bad it might be if we never went to Confession?** Whatever we struggle with now would be even worse! **Or conversely how good you could be if you went to Confession more frequently?** Or that in God's wisdom He sees Confession as an opportunity for us human beings to grow in humility: mentioning these same things over and over again in Confession should cause us at some point to realize that on our own we can't overcome them - and maybe that will be the moment when we are finally set free from them! There is a

method to the madness: God is working with us over the long haul. **Holiness doesn't occur overnight in our lives.** Or as Pope Benedict put it in a simple but good way to a group of 2nd graders in Italy a few years back, who asked him what was the point of going to Confession if we keep telling God the same sins, the Pope said *"Confession is only necessary in the case of a serious sin, but it is very helpful to confess regularly in order to foster the cleanliness and beauty of the soul and to mature day by day in life, just as we need to clean our rooms on a regular basis or the dirt which at first is invisible starts to build up, the same thing happens with sin it accumulates over time and draws us more and more away from God; Regular Confession prevents that from happening."* Remember *God's power is made perfect in our weakness* and eventually we grow in goodness if we keep up our efforts. **Keep trying to be good and eventually it will happen through God's grace, in His time.** Others will often notice the improvement in us before we do since God wants to keep us from pride which is the mother of all sin. **Everything serves a purpose in God's holy plan even the sins we struggle with.** Yes, we have to try to do better, but realize it is a long term process. Putting this in perspective helps reduce our spiritual anxiety. **The Sacrament of Confession is an essential aid in this, which is why the saints recommended at least Confessing once a month.** Some of us need to do better in that regard if we are honest with God and ourselves; in fact some of us haven't been to Confession in years- what are you waiting for? In the natural world if we only weeded our gardens or dusted or cleaned our rooms "once in a blue moon", it would be difficult if not impossible to keep things clean; well the same principle applies spiritually as Pope Benedict pointed out to the 1st Communicants, and in light of eternity spiritual weeding and cleaning is much more important than weeding and cleaning on a physical level, even if we don't like doing any of these things.☺ *God's power truly is made perfect in our weakness.* **Even the people who irritate us to no end in our life have a divine purpose:** God allows them to be there so that we have an opportunity to grow in charity. *All things work together for the good of those who love God (Rom 8); and His grace is sufficient for us, for power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corth 12).* God bless you.