

Homily: 25th Sunday: 2021: Cycle B: Wis 2: 12, 17-20; Ps 54; James 3: 16 – 4:3; Mk 9: 30-37

“What Matters in the End: the Salvation of Souls – not the Passions and Vanities of this Passing World”

All of us deal with the mystery of good and evil on a daily basis. The choice is ultimately ours whether we embrace good or evil. And the battle is in the human heart – the seat of the passions or emotions. As the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** puts it so well, even after we are baptized and receive God’s sanctifying grace, “*It remains for the holy people of God to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ’s faithful mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.*” (paragraph: 2549). Let’s delve into what this really means for us in daily life.

1. **In Christ human thoughts, passions and emotions are able to reach their fulfillment in charity and divine goodness - if we allow God to transform them over time.** In the 1st reading from the book of Wisdom we see the opposite reality, in a frightening way: *a philosophy of evil thoughts flowing out of an evil heart. Instead of repenting for sin the person with an evil heart attacks the one who is trying to be good, or attacks the teaching of God and the Catholic faith which is the spiritual blueprint that points us to the true good for mankind, the narrow path that leads to Heaven.* This attitude of justifying evil and attacking God and the Christian philosophy of life is a frightening reality all humans can fall into if we are not careful, and Sacred Scripture is warning us of it: *either we repent when we do evil and sin or eventually we may end up delighting in evil and hate God and the good that flows from Him.* All the evil leaders in history, including some in our time who even claim to be Catholic were not born evil. It was through a series of free evil choices, small at first and bigger over time that led to them viewing life in such an evil way; and in the beginning it was also small feelings and acts of evil which when unrepented led to ever greater acts of evil. They started to take delight in evil rather than good. We may say, *well I am not going to kill anyone, or encourage others to do great evil.* That may very well be true, but every time we do sin and make excuses for ourselves, rather than repenting, going to the Sacrament of Confession, and with the help of

God's grace trying to change for the better, we move in the direction of evil rather than good.

2. In the second reading we hear St. James make reference to **our human passions – the sensitive part of the human person or our feelings which is what connects our mind and heart**. The principal passions of humans are *love, hatred, desire, fear; joy, sadness, and anger* (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 1762 – 1775). They are neither good nor evil in themselves. It depends on what we choose to do with them. For example, if we have a feeling of impatience, or impurity, or anger that arises in our hearts, once we become aware of these passions or emotions, it is an opportunity to grow in the virtue of patience or purity or kindness - or conversely to end up sinning in our hearts and possibly in our actions. **The passions are the raw material of the moral life; our wills are what determines whether our passions lead to good or evil**. The battle for holiness is to get our passions more and more under the influence of God's grace in our mind (intellect) and especially our will; rather than letting our passions take over our lives in a disordered way. *Sometimes we have to will to do the good with God's grace and the support of others - even when our mind and emotions are not there yet - e.g., people getting away from addictions, be it alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, social media, videogames, etc.* To obtain this type of **Christian self-mastery** is a great grace. And St. James warns us today, if we don't engage in this battle for self-mastery in Christ over our disordered passions, we will not only not make any real progress in the spiritual life, but it eventually leads to great evil in our personal lives and in society at large. **Look at our own culture** - e.g., over the last couple of years the exposes, by Lila Rose and her great pro-life organization **Live Action** (pray for them and give them some financial support if you are able: www.liveaction.org), on the evil organization Planned Parenthood and how they encourage more and more abortions to make money and then selling the body parts to make more money – and so as St. James says, *war, envy, fighting, murder, jealousy, selfish ambition, and every foul practice* prevail in society.

3. **There is a better way!** Yes, to win this spiritual battle we must daily pray for the humility and the courage to invite Christ Jesus to form our minds, wills, hearts, and

the passions/ emotions contained in our hearts more and more in His truth and charity in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we will long for good rather than evil and will be humble enough to be intellectually honest. **And over time our passions will not lead us astray, but instead will be the material to help us to grow in holiness,** like the saints who often overcame greatly disordered passions to be Christ-like: e.g., *St. Francis de Sales and his anger issues* (almost all interior); *St. Augustine and his lust*, *St. Camillus and his love of fighting and addiction to gambling*, *St. Therese and her over sensitivity and inner pride*. But like them we must be willing to make the daily effort to get our inner thoughts and feelings under the direction of the Holy Spirit, putting on the mind and heart of Christ and making of our lives a living sacrifice of noble struggle and increasing goodness to the glory of God and for the salvation of souls as St. Paul says (see ***Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corth 2: 6-16***). It's a battle worth fighting because it leads to salvation at the end of our life - either to Heaven directly or to Purgatory - eventually leading to Heaven, and we can bring many souls with us on the Path of Salvation *by our daily prayers, acts of charity, sacrifices and acts of reparation in company with our Lady of Fatima* to help her save souls in Jesus, for so many souls are in danger of being lost to Hell forever as She said at Fatima. With the help of Mary's motherly protection and intercession before the throne of God, may we be ever more docile to the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation in Jesus Christ for ourselves and others. That's what will matter in the end, not all the vanities and disordered passions of this passing earthly life which distract us so much. Let's re-focus on the Lord in all things and invite those who have drifted from the Catholic faith to come back or to discover it for the first time in all its splendor and beauty for the salvation of souls. God bless you.