

Homily: 25th Sunday: 2015: Cycle B: Wis 2: 12, 17-20; Ps 54; James 3: 16 – 4:3; Mk 9: 30-37

“The Interior Battle between Good and Evil in our Thoughts and Emotions/Passions”

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. The human heart is truly fascinating, the subject of all good novels really: it is the seat of love or of hate. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, the human heart is the moral, spiritual and emotional center of the human person. It is where our inmost thoughts and feelings come together. How can we use our inmost thoughts, human passions and feelings to choose goodness rather than evil?

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 His Catholic Church which points us to the true good for mankind. This is a frightening reality all of us 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*. It can happen: witness some of the sinister people in history like Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide back in 1994, the terrorist group ISIS, serial killers, abortionists, etc., who have done great evil and harm to others. Those are worst case examples, but many people fall into this evil dynamic on a smaller scale. **The evil historical figures were not born that way, they became evil over time.** I like to read about them, to learn what not to do. It was through a series of 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 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 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 will; rather than letting our passions take over our lives in a disordered way. To gain 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- e.g. the evil Planned Parenthood is doing in abortion and then selling body parts- do we care?!): *war, envy, fighting, murder, jealousy, selfish ambition, and every foul practice*. Also if we don’t let Christ be the Lord of our passions/emotions we will end up committing the same sins over and over again, and it will probably get worst over time because we will get frustrated and give up on some level. Our disordered passions will win out and we will be driven by instinct, blown here and there by desire, instead of by our intellects and wills formed by God’s truth. We will follow the path of least resistance. And have no real inner peace, and so then we will lash out at the

people around us on a regular basis, blaming them for our problems and misery, with much bickering and fighting. What a nightmare!

3. **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. 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 temper; St. Augustine and his lust, and St. Camillus and his love of fighting and addiction to gambling. 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, making of our lives a living sacrifice of goodness to the glory of God as St. Paul says (see *Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corth 2: 6-16*). It's a battle worth fighting because it either leads in the end to eternal bliss (Heaven) if we win the battle; or to ultimate misery (Hell)- if we lose the battle! May God help us to spiritual win in the end. God bless you.