

10th Sunday: “Where are you?” “Who told you, you are naked?”

Today’s readings focus on the theme of discernment between listening to the voice of God and the voice of the evil one. In contrast to the first creation account in the Bk. of Genesis which presents God as ‘distant and majestic’, the second creation narrative presents a more anthropomorphic view of God, which means God is presented as having feelings and characteristics like a human being. God is closer to humans; He walks and talks with them. This is a beautiful image of God, of a deep level of intimacy between God and humans. God seeks out humans, but Adam and Eve hide themselves behind the trees in the garden, when they hear God approaching.

In this narrative, the garden resembles a courtroom, where God is examining the accused. As is very common in human nature, they start the blame game, instead of accepting the responsibility for their actions. Adam indirectly blames God since it was God who gave the woman to him as companion, Eve blames serpent for having deceived her into eating the fruit. Interestingly, only the serpent is cursed. B&S, sin not only fractured the relationship between man and God, but it also fractured the relationship between the humans. *Sin ultimately destroys relationships*. Sin makes us suspicious and bitter and turns us against even those who love us.

To have a deeper insight into this narrative, we need to keep aside the popular interpretations which focus on the role of woman in the origin of sin in the world and turn our attention to the two questions posed by God. His first question is, “*Where are you?*” This is more than just God’s inquiry about their whereabouts. This question instead, is ‘*an enquiry into the inward journey*’. ‘Where are you’ is a request toward a self-examination and intimacy with the Divine.

The 2nd question, “*who told you that you are naked?*” is a reminder that we have to be very careful about *whose voice we listen to*. It is a question about the complex theological task of ‘discerning right from wrong’, an ongoing process in everyday human life. Today we are circled by so many voices that tell us: you are this, you are that.

Especially the younger generation is so confused as to whose voice to listen to.

St. Paul, in our 2nd reading brings us hope by distinguishing between our outer self and inner self. He says: “we are not discouraged, because our inner self is being renewed day by day”. This renewal is possible only with the nourishment through the word of God and Holy Eucharist. The constant renewal of our inner self is essential for the discernment of right and wrong, and to choose good and stay with it.

Today’s gospel presents Jesus as if he is a ‘social misfit’, because of his radical ministry. His family tries to save his reputation, by attempting to put an end to his unconventional ministry. However, Jesus in his reply, redefines the meaning of the family, saying that *those who do God’s will* are ‘His family’. The Jews believed that because they were of the lineage of Abraham, they would automatically enter the kingdom of God. Jesus’ reply is to emphasize the point that the family relationships were not a free ticket into the kingdom of God.

Human family relationships are beautiful and necessary, because God is the one who created and provided those relationships. Here, Jesus is not minimizing the importance of family relationships, rather he is emphasizing that having a right relationship with God by obeying His will is the most important. (*Is there an ‘unforgivable sin?’*) The unforgivable blasphemy is to attribute Jesus’ works to an unclean spirit rather than to the Holy Spirit.

In short, today’s readings encourage us to not to give up in the face of difficulties. The Satan will discourage us by telling us that what we are called to do is too difficult, and it’s not worth it. We need to be able to discern that voice as coming from evil and refuse it, and then have to fight evil in the world without fear, because there is someone stronger than the devil who is on our side. And be sure, each one of us is part of this battle. The big question today is, ‘whose side are you on?’. Let’s pray that each one of us do our part in making this world, the original ‘Garden of Eden’. Amen