

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

23 September 2018

HOMILY

I read from a priest saying about a man and a parrot seated side by side on a plane. The parrot screamingly shouted, "I want ice!" The man also shouted, "I want ice!" So, the flight attendant came forward bringing ice. The parrot shouted, "I want scotch!" The man mimicked the parrot saying he liked scotch. After couple of demanding orders, the man and the parrot were thrown out of the plane. While they were going down, the parrot screamed at the man saying, "For someone who can't fly, you complain too much!"

The sources of my homily is from Wikipedia, Ode to Envy by Parul Seghal in TED Ex, St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae #36, the Readings for this Sunday and of course, the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, Rejoice and Be Glad: 4th Chapter: Signs of Holiness in Today's World (Do your best. Improve your lives. Be passionately driven like Christ).

Today's Gospel is the 2nd Christ Jesus' prediction of his suffering.

1st Prediction: **Mark 8:31-32**. Who do you say that I am? Jesus rebuking Peter. Then Jesus said to "deny ourselves, carry our cross and follow him." The disciples were clueless about what Jesus had said about his passion, death and resurrection.

2nd Prediction: **Mark 9:30-32**. "What are you arguing over there?" Jesus asked his friends. We can presume that their argument became quite loud enough that Jesus heard it. But he had to ask: "What were you arguing about on the way?" This could mean that his disciples deliberately kept their distance from Jesus while they argued. When Jesus confronted them they were silenced. "They remained silent," the gospel says. Probably they were silenced because of shame or some other feelings. Their feelings clouded their judgment. Instead of focusing on Jesus, instead of enjoying the presence of Jesus, they have other concerns. Sometimes, we have the same tendencies and preoccupations in front of Jesus.

3rd Prediction: **Mark 10:32-34**. Jesus and the disciples were already on the way to Jerusalem. For the 3rd time, Jesus told his disciples what was going to

happen. Instead of focusing on the words of Jesus, James and John, sons of Zebedee, requested that they'll be sitting on the left and right of Jesus.

A little side-track to our basic catechism. Remember the seven (7) deadly sins? We can put them in acronym PAL EGGS (**PRIDE, ANGER, LUST, ENVY, GREED, GLUTTONY, SLOTH**).

Our reflection now will focus on 4th word: Envy. Today's 2nd reading from the Letter of James begins with the word envy. St. Thomas Aquinas in his book, the Summa Theologica question #36, quoting St. John Damascene says: Envy is a sorrow for another's good. Deep in your heart if you see someone having some blessings or achievement and you felt the tinge of sorrow, that is not good. Something is wrong. We have seen our friend having a new house, car, phone, having a newborn baby, being promoted, being cured of cancer. Instead of rejoicing with them, for some they feel sorrow. Feeling sorrow is envy.

Number of years ago, a group of Dutch psychologists made some experiment. Participants were asked to imagine that the subject of their envy had suffered a setback. The psychologists made two types of envy- malicious envy or benign envy. The main difference is the ill-will feeling. If there is a ill-will, that is malicious. Benign if there is none.

The Bible has couple of stories about envy. In Genesis 4, envy is said to be the motivation behind [Cain](#) murdering his brother, [Abel](#). Cain envied Abel because God favoured Abel's sacrifice over Cain's. In Genesis 30- we read that Leah envied Rachel for being pregnant. In Genesis 37, we read about Joseph the dreamer was the source of envy of his brothers. In 1 Samuel 18, King Saul envied David when he heard the women song of joy: "David killed 10,000 while Saul killed 1000."

In the New Testament, we read that Jesus Christ was the envy of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes. We have more other New Testament examples but our time is running out. The solution to our envious feelings? First, acknowledge your feelings. Acknowledgement of feeling is the first step to healing. Editing or curtailing our feelings will not help us. As truthful and hurtful as it is, acknowledge it. But let us not end there. The second is counting your blessings. Counting your blessings is an activity in itself that might cancel our envious feelings. Third is cultivating your time, talent and treasures. Improve yourself the greater glory of God. Be happy. Work and pray hard. If you still

feel a tinge of envy, jealousy or resentment in your heart, consult God and ask him to take it out.

Now envious feeling will not go hand in hand with “rejoice and be glad!” (The title of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation.) Envy is feeling sorrow for another’s good. The 4th chapter is entitled “Signs of Holiness in Today’s World.” In paragraph #112, envy can be defeated “if a person has solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us.” It is God who loves and sustains us. If we truly believe that this God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is truly loving, forgiving and sustaining us, envy will melt in our heart, mind and soul. In #117, Pope Francis added advice on how to keep the devil at bay: “Rejoice in the good of others as if it were your own.” Be glad that your brother or sister has the gift. If you see your brother, sister or neighbour has gifts; can’t we simply rejoice with them? They could have earned or worked hard for it (or they applied very big loan just to have it!). In paragraph #122 says: “add joy and a sense of humour.” Life is not fair. It will never be fair. If life is fair then all of us could have the same parents, born in the same place and time. And in #126, “sadness can be a sign of ingratitude to God the giver.” We can get so caught up in ourselves that we are unable to recognize God’s gifts. There is a tendency for us in constantly gazing on someone else’s time, talent and treasure and ignoring our own. Smile. God loves you. God is blessing you in many ways you never knew. You have a God who is constantly loving, forgiving, protecting and sustaining you.