

## **Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time C2025**

There is a British comedy called “Keeping the Appearances”. It ran on television from October 1990 to December 1995. The main actress, Hyacinth Bucket, (pronounced Bouquet), lives only to impress. She pretends to be what she is not and invents all sorts of stuff to justify what she does to the point of transforming her husband, Richard, into a civil servant.

Living in such a world of appearances means above to manipulate the truth and to care less about the veracity of what one says and does. In the end, that makes the human language that someone uses a double sword that can turn in one direction or another. That is exactly the point today’s readings want to make.

To set things right, let us start with an observation. Human language plays a big role in our relationship with one another. It is susceptible to reveal who the person we are dealing with is; whether he is trustworthy or not; whether he is reliable or not, etc.

However, not all languages are honest and reflect the real person. It happens very often that people hide the truth of who they are or of what they think under the false image of agreement. That is the case with the language of diplomacy or flattery that does not reflect the truth in the heart of an individual.

It is that danger of double language that our Lord is denouncing in today’s Gospel. For our Lord, only honesty with one another can help us build true communication and right relationships with one another. Anytime there is not a unified language that expresses the truth that is in the heart of an individual, what is done is hypocrisy.

The question here would be: What can we do in order to avoid hypocrisy? How can we become honest in our dealings with one another? Our Lord proposes a threefold way that can help us achieve such an objective.

The first way is the conversion of heart. Conversion means a change. It can be a change of heart, mentality or behaviors. It means the pursuit of the truth, a U-turn so that we find the right direction that can help us live truthfully and honestly.

Our Lord formulates this way through the example of a blind person guiding another blind. In fact, a blind is a sick person who, because of the absence of sight, cannot see where he is going. Even if it is true that by losing the sight, a person can develop other senses, it is, however, impossible for a blind person to guide another who is blind. Otherwise the ending of the story will be catastrophic. If a blind man fakes to be healthy by pretending to be seeing, he puts his life and that of others in danger.

We have to change if we want to become honest and reliable people. Without conversion, we will never be good disciples of our Lord. We need to recognize our shortcomings and look for healing. Otherwise we will be a danger to ourselves and to others.

The second way is self-criticism. Self-criticism means an inner dialogue with the self by which one recognizes his strengths and his weaknesses, his qualities and his faults. Self-criticism is also the capacity of judging oneself before judging others. It is only when we courageously look inside ourselves and we identify our mistakes that we can begin the journey of correcting others.

When people criticize others without a self-criticism, they end up in hypocrisy. When they set high standards for others and fail to do the same with themselves, it becomes hypocrisy. That is what our Lord is saying, “Why do you notice the splinter in the eyes of your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye”?

Our criticism of others might be true, but when it is done without judging ourselves, it becomes self-righteousness and self-justification. Self-righteousness and self-justification, in turn, lead to the mechanism of scapegoat where we project our faults on others because we want to ignore our responsibilities.

When our Lord invites us to look first at the splinter in our eyes, it does not mean that we cannot criticize others, what he wants is that we come to the awareness of our scars and darkness of ours. Instead of focusing only on others we have to look, first, at ourselves and see what we have to change in order to be honest, sincere and truthful. One thing is honesty and constructive criticism; another is a flat and destructive criticism.

The third way is transparency. Transparency means a lack of hidden agendas and unveiled motivations. It means also, speaking the truth of the heart. As a good tree is recognized by its fruits, so is a man recognized by his deeds. Good comes from goodness and evil comes from evil.

For our words and our deeds to be good, they must come from a heart that is pure and good. A man’s words flow out of what fills his heart. Which leads to the question, what does fill our heart? What kind of heart is behind the way we criticize others?

The way we offer criticism depends on our heart’s conditions. If goodness is absent from our heart, there is a problem. When what we say comes from a genuine attempt to help others, people will listen to us. But, if they doubt, they will not listen to us. It is impossible to do the deeds of God unless we possess the heart of God.

**Sirach 27: 4-7; 1 Corinth 15: 54-58; Luke 6: 39-45**



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