

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person(s) who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Option 1

“You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.”

Jesus was clearly not reluctant to confront the hypocrisy of the leaders of the Jewish people of his day. By his actions and harsh words Jesus challenged the many rules and restrictions imposed on the people that had nothing to do with loving God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Jewish leaders used those rules and restrictions to maintain control over the vast majority of the people who were not ignorant, but were uneducated. They were taught to fear God and did not question the purely human dictates of their leaders. Jesus taught people about the Love of God and that a loving God would not demand of us things that are unreasonable and irrational. Jesus and his disciples ignored the minute dietary and sanitary mandates. He was not opposed to cleanliness but he boldly proclaimed that it was not what we put in our mouth that offends and hurts God. It is what comes out of our mouth as a result of what we think and feel. What comes out of our mouth?

Option 2

“Well did Isaiah prophesy about *you hypocrites*.”

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about why He and his disciples did not follow tradition about diet and washing, He called them *hypocrites* and quoted Isaiah, “*This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines mere human precepts.*” It was a stinging rebuke of the religious leaders of His day who claimed superior knowledge of God and imposed requirements on the People of God that caused them to fear God more than love Him. Jesus challenged the Pharisees to be better stewards of their influence with the people to help them grow in their relationship with God. We live in an age of incredible access to Scripture and the teaching of our Church that can help us learn about the greatness of our God and His unconditional love for us. Do we honor God with our lips, but keep our hearts far from Him? If we fail to take advantage of all that is available to help us learn what God truly expects of us, do we risk hearing Jesus say to us, *You hypocrites!*

September 9, 2018
Mark 7:31-37
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Option 1

**“Then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him,
“Ephphatha”— that is, “Be opened!”**

Jesus did not have a horse or a camel. He walked from Tyre, on the east coast of the Mediterranean, north to Sidon, then southeast to his home area of Galilee. On his way he taught people that God loved them and cared about them. Jesus traveled slow, but word of his teaching and help of people in need traveled faster. He continued to the pagan region of the “Ten Cities” on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Relatives or friends of a deaf and mute man heard about Jesus and asked him to “lay hands” on the man, who may not have been Jewish. Jesus touched his ears and tongue, then “looked up to heaven and groaned, and said, ‘Be opened!’” Jesus did not hesitate; he did not make any conditions or take up a collection. Instead, “He ordered them not to tell anyone.” He was not seeking notoriety, wealth or power. Jesus is challenging us, whom God has blessed with the gifts of hearing, eyesight and speech, to use them for our own benefit and enjoyment, and to speak up when we hear or see others in need.

Option 2

“He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak. He ordered them not to tell anyone.”

Jesus observed the needs and hurts of people. He helped them understand that their own faith cured them of their afflictions and obsessions. He did not seek praise or rewards. He tried to prevent notoriety or publicity. A simple “Thank you!” is all He expected, but sometimes did not even receive that. God has graciously and freely given each of us a vast array of gifts. When we use and enjoy them, do we express our gratitude? When we share them with others, do we expect acknowledgment and praise? Do we want our left hand [and everybody else’s hands] to know what our right hand has done? The truly generous person gives until it *helps*, not until it *hurts*, and does not seek recognition or reward, except the knowledge of having done what God expects. The true measure of our generosity is the good that we do for others that no one knows about - except God.

September 16, 2018
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 8:27-35 and James 2:14-18

Option 1

**Jesus rebuked Peter, “Get behind me, Satan.
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”**

Jesus seems to be hard on Peter, about whom he will later declare, “Upon this rock I will build my church” and will give the Keys to the Kingdom of God. Also, when Jesus asked his disciples “Who do you say that I am?” it is Peter who answers, “You are the Christ.” Peter believed in Jesus. He loved Jesus. So when Jesus said he would “suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes; be killed; and rise after three days,” it is not surprising that Peter would want to prevent that from happening to his friend that he believed was the “the Christ.” Jesus tells Peter not to tempt him to abandon what he knew he must do to fulfill his mission as “the Christ.” He teaches his disciples that they must be detached from the things of this world, including our earthly life, in order to imitate him. Eventually, they would understand what Jesus meant. They would suffer much and sacrifice all to imitate Jesus. They eventually thought like God, not like men. Who do we think like?

Option 2

**“What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”**

When Jesus revealed to His disciples the fate he would suffer for completing the work for which He was sent into the world, Peter tried to persuade Him to avoid it. It is the equivalent of Peter saying to us, “Your faith is enough, you do not have to do the work.” The debate about *faith* versus *works* as the source of salvation has occupied Christians for centuries, despite the teaching of St. James in the First Century: “Demonstrate your faith to me *without works* and I will demonstrate my faith to you *from my works*.” We can do good works without faith. We can even do good works without trying, or knowing, that we have done them. But if we have true faith in Jesus Christ, and respond to God’s love for us, we are obligated to do good works. Our faith is revealed by the good works that we do. And the lack of good works in our life is a symptom of a lack of faith and a lack of understanding of the love that God has for us.

September 23, 2018
Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 9:30-37

Option 1

“But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.”

Jesus knew that his actions and words were threatening the Jewish and Roman leaders of his day. He knew that if he continued to attract people to his teaching to love God, not fear him; to have faith in power of God, not the power of men; and to love one another as we love ourselves, the people with power would try to silence him and make an example of him to frighten people so they would not follow and imitate him. Jesus knew his followers were worried about him. Jesus was worried about them. Jesus was worried about himself. And he knew his friends had questions they were afraid to ask. So he taught them that to lead people to God, we must be a

servant to those we lead; we must welcome and care about everyone like we would a small child; we must accept the resistance, rejection, and abuse of those who feel that their wealth and power are threatened when we imitate Jesus. Do we want to lead people to God by imitating Jesus, we must serve them, we must receive them as we would a small child, and we must accept the consequences.

Option 2

“If anyone wishes to be the first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

A teacher with a bag of candy in front of a class of young students who ask “Who wants to be first?” will likely see a sea of wildly waving hands and hear shouts of “Me, me, me!” A teacher who has given an assignment to memorize *The Declaration of Independence* who ask “Who wants to be first?” is likely not to see any hands at all. How children and adults respond to the question, “Who wants to be first?” often depends on whether the activity involved is a treat or a task, pleasant or unpleasant. When we are challenged to be the *first to serve others* and respond to God’s generosity by sharing our talents, abilities, and resources, do we shout “Me, me, me!” and rush to be first? Or do we turn away, turn on the television, or play tennis or golf, or spend hours texting our BFF-of-the-day? When we are standing with others waiting to enter into the presence of God, will Jesus point to us and say, “You first!” or will he be point at someone else?

September 30, 2018

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48 and James 5:1:6

Option 1

“Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, will surely not lose his reward.”

Jesus did not come to form an exclusive club. He did not come to form a social organization that would be very selective about the people allowed to join. Jesus came to call all who would listen and observe what he did; to join him by doing the same and telling others about him. A group of disciples believed in him and followed him. They knew Jesus and they knew one another. He sent them out to preach and heal people in need. They returned with reports of the great things they accomplished in his name. When they saw people who were not in their group doing other great things in the name of Jesus, they tried to stop them. We can imagine them thinking, “Who do they think they are? They are not members of the club. We should stop them.” Jesus is teaching us that attitudes of exclusivity, elitism, superiority and authoritarianism cause us to sin. He cautions us that if parts of our bodies or self-centered attitudes cause us to sin, CUT THEM OFF of our bodies or CUT THEM OUT of our life. Do we need to do any cutting?

Option 2

“Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.”

James seems to have a rather dim view of the *rich* and predicts some rather dire consequences of their *wealth*. But James is really teaching us that being *rich* and having *wealth* is not, in itself, evil. It is how we become *rich* and how we acquire our *wealth*; what *we do* with it or *fail to do* with it, that can cause us misery and make us weep. In the wake of many natural and economic crises in our world many *rich* people shared their *wealth* - their wealth of talents, abilities, gifts, time and material resources. But sadly, many did not. Jesus challenges us to imitate Him by following the example of those who did share. We all have a wealth gifts and riches from God

that we can share with others in need. It may not be great financial wealth or a special talent. It may be the time we can spend to check on and just listen to people who are homebound. How we acquire and use riches and wealth will determine whether we are joyful and happy, or whether we “weep and wail over our impending miseries.”