

Twenty-second Sunday Per Annum (B)
August 30, 2015.

Listen to me, all of you, and understand there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile them, but things that come out of a person are what defile them' (Mk. 7:20).

The lessons of the Mass today speak to us very clearly of the essence of religious observance and its transformative effect on our lives. St. James summarises it very succinctly: *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world (Jm. 1:27).* His metaphorical definition of religion expresses the need for charity, that is, sacrificial love and the need for personal integrity. Otherwise expressed, there is an obvious social component to our personal relationship with God and the practice of religion cannot be reduced either to an indefinite form of spirituality or spiritualism – popular with the *'I'm spiritual but not religious crowd'*, or to a social activism devoid of any supernatural component. This form of social activism is often guided by theories and movements at odds with orthodox Christian beliefs.

Last Sunday, we noted that when human beings are not seen to be in the image and likeness of God they lose their meaning. Our weekly celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a bold affirmation of our meaning and dignity. The Son of God who died for our salvation nourishes us with His own life. Human life, created in the image of God, is destined to share in the divine life by grace, here and for all eternity. By living an intensely Eucharistic life, each one of us can become a powerful witness to this profound mystery of human life. The mysteries of God as well as His truths are best revealed not by arguments but by people. If we make the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery the centre of our life, the effects of this will manifest themselves in the perfection of Christian charity which defines holiness and in the transformation of our culture. This has always been the pattern at work in the ongoing work of evangelization through the ages.

None of this is possible however, unless we assert and defend the traditional understanding of virtue as the key to a happy life. The promotion of vice that in many countries including our own has become stated government policy has created false expectations and human beings, most especially the vulnerable, are victimized. The only path to true human happiness is one of love and devotion to the God who created and redeemed every one of us. In many ways we who subscribe to this belief have become a little flock, not unlike the Israelites of old who received these words of admonishment and encouragement: *Now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe....You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God....You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples. (Deut. 4:1-6).* St. Paul addressed similar words to the small community of believers in Philippi, encouraging them *to shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life (Phil. 2:15).* In two generations our culture has modified itself in radically unexpected ways. Ours has become a culture in which meaning and fact are deliberately deconstructed. There is no clearer example of this than the revised Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum 2015. I encourage all of you; whether you have children or grandchildren in the Ontario school system or not, to familiarise yourself with the content of the curriculum and to take whatever measure to protect our children

from what can be described as a grand experiment in social engineering by sexualizing children at the earliest age possible. (https://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Sex_Ed_curriculum)

It is no exaggeration to say that truth has now become hate speech. Our Catholic institutions, including our churches, will experience more and more pressure to conform to the new pansexual state where increasingly the idea prevails that traditional religion in any form has no place in the public square. You may be familiar with these words of the late Francis Cardinal George the saintly Archbishop of Chicago, spoken five years ago: *I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the Church has done so often in human history* (<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/tim-drake/the-myth-and-the-reality-of-ill-die-in-my-bed>). God sustains the world, in good times and in bad. We affirm this in the first article of the Creed. Nevertheless, there is nothing progressive about sin, even when it is promoted as enlightened tolerance. We take heed of Our Lord's words from our Sunday Gospel text: *For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person* (Mk. 7:21-23).

What are we to do? We must never lose sight of the fact that our discipleship is an intensely personal undertaking. The solution to a crisis is ultimately personal. Each one of us therefore must cultivate a personal faith, integrity and holiness. *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world* (Jm. 1:27). If we wish to provide a solution, humility before God must be our fundamental attitude in relation to God and to His law. Our prayer must be accompanied by daily spiritual education, that is to say, an effort to deepen our knowledge of the faith through ongoing instruction in the faith; so that we might hand on the authentic faith to our young people, and keep the faith, as a service to others. Let us continue to pray for the conversion of poor sinners, as Our Lady requested at Fatima and let us pray that we might persevere. The evidence of human history is very clear: the world divorced from the God who created and redeemed it inevitably comes to a bad end. *Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Pt. 1:13).