

Homily For Tuesday of the 24rd Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - September 19, 2023

1 Timothy 3:1-3 "Deacons must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

Psalm 101:1-6 "I will walk with integrity of heart within my house."

Luke 7:1-10 "The dead man sat up and Jesus gave him to his mother."

Christ's Virtue In Us

Introduction

The list of the qualities of a Christian could be short or it could be long. We could probably just take a line from the psalm today and leave it at that: "I will walk with integrity of heart within my house. I will not set before my eyes anything that is base." Integrity of heart means my deepest intentions are always to do what is right. It means to be innocent and blameless. Avoiding "anything that is base" means to not go anywhere where I will be tempted to sin, or to not invite anything into my life that might tempt me to sin. That is, after all, part of our act of contrition at the end of our sacramental confession, "to avoid the near occasion of sin."

Timothy

Our beloved St. Paul often makes lists of the virtues and vices. I wonder if he ever worries that, in trying to list everything, he might leave something out. Still, if we want to have integrity of heart before God, and avoid anything that is base, his lists are a pretty good place to start. Today's passage from 1 Timothy is for bishops and deacons, but also for women. I make an assumption for each of these. First is that the list of qualities for a bishop represent the virtues that all Christians must aspire to. Who would argue against any baptized person being above reproach, temperate, sensible, not a drunkard, not violent, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money? Of course, a bishop should have these qualities to a high degree, but they are for all of us.

The bishop must also be a good teacher of faith. In fact, whenever any of us are involved in teaching: in a classroom, in a home or at work or on the street, we are participating in the teaching authority of the bishop, which comes directly through the Apostles from Christ himself. We do not teach on our own authority.

The devil is most thwarted by good spiritual leadership of bishops, making it most important for them to behave well and for us to pray most earnestly for them, especially our own Bishop William.

The list of a deacon's Christian qualities are certainly a challenge directly to me. One of the things I was most keenly aware of when I was ordained to the diaconate was that the church itself could be judged by my behaviour and my priorities. Paul wants deacons to prove blameless and hold to the mystery of our faith with a clear conscience. I ask for your prayers that these things might be visible in me as your deacon.

Again, these virtues should be evident in all the faithful. Paul mentions women, which I believe in this passage, represents all lay people, that they also are to hold the virtues worthy of Christians, especially faithfulness in all things.

Luke

So the bishop, the deacon and the laity demonstrate and manifests Christ to the world. Today, we see Jesus Christ as the one who is compassionate and the one who makes death into life. He is the one who not only has these qualities to which we aspire and are called, but he actually is the reality of those things which we are to model for others. He doesn't just possess those things. He is the source of all things good and virtuous. In the world, there is a desire for goodness but, without Christ, this becomes impossible. With Christ, all things are possible for us who worship him.

He goes to Nain is not far from Mt Tabor. The only child of a widow moves him with compassion. His heart has pity. Perhaps he is thinking of his own mother, who will be in the same predicament. This woman forebodes what Mary will suffer. Jesus identifies the dead man as a young man. He will be that young man, being raised, not just a return to human life, but resurrected to a whole new

dimension of life, beyond space and time. He opens the path for us, not just to human virtue but to a life with God. In him we dare to say we will have the perfection of life that we seek in this life.

The people are prompted by the miracle to say that God has visited his people. This is more true than they know or can imagine. They see Jesus not afraid to be ritually defiled by touching dead body. He is not afraid of death because he is the resurrection. He reverses death, which is a preparation for later when he will draw people through death to eternal life.

Jesus gave the young man to his mother. He does this because of his compassionate heart. Later in his suffering passion, he will give the beloved disciple, John, the beloved disciple, to Mary, to be her son. In human and natural terms, she would be a widow with an only son who died. But also, for the most divine and supernatural of reasons, he will give all beloved sons and daughters, to be joined to Mary who brings Jesus to the world.

Jesus brings together the best of the natural virtues with those which are of God. He makes the natural and supernatural come together, the physical and the spiritual, the sacred and profane, the ordinary with the extraordinary. He can do this because his human and his divine nature are uniquely joined together in perfect harmony, in a way that no other natural phenomenon can match. That's why the Church had to develop a name for it that would be unique and would not be used for anything else. It's called the hypostatic union, the understanding that Jesus Christ is true God and true man.

Call to Conversion

If we are judging who has the qualities we can trust to be the model for our life, look to Jesus. If we are looking for a human person to save us from despair, look to Jesus. Have you ever thought that something in you, perhaps some spark of life or a dream, had died? Finding Jesus is to find life. We are all called to be saints. Saints are those who carry Jesus in their words and deeds, and imitate His virtue. Our world needs the saints you and I are called to be today. Hold fast to what is true. Hold to him who is life.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me. You are my rescuer, my help.*

Collect: *Draw near to your servants, O Lord, that you may restore what you have created and keep safe what you have restored.*

1 Timothy: *A bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful. He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into the snare of the devil. Deacons must be serious, not double tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money. They must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested. Women likewise must be temperate, not slanderers and faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once and let them manage their children and their households well.*

Psalm: *I will walk with integrity of heart within my house. I will not set before my eyes anything that is base. I will look with favour on the faithful. Whoever walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.*

Luke: *Jesus went to a town called Nain with a large crowd following. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son and she was a widow. With her was a large crowd. The Lord had compassion and said to her, "Do not weep." Jesus touched the pallet and said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of the m and they glorified God.*