

FEBRUARY 19, 2022
Friday of the 6th Week in OT
James 3: 1-10; Mark 9: 2-13

“USE OUR TOUNGUE RESPONSIBLY.”

There is a saying that the tongue is sharper than a sword. A sword wound may heal, but the wound of someone’s words breaking our heart might not. This is the message of our First Reading today from James. He warned us that the tongue, even small part of the body can boast of great exploits. James “begins by suggesting that few are competent to become teachers of the faith, for the simple reason that such people have to be much more accountable for what they do and say. Teachers, in particular, because of the influence they have, will always be held more accountable. They can make or break a person’s character. Remember Jesus’ castigation of the Pharisees and the Scribes for not practising what they preached. ‘They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearances say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation’ (Luke 20:47). Among teachers, of course, we can include all religious leaders – bishops, priests, religious, as well as parents and teachers and any who are responsible for the formation of the young and vulnerable. In fact, says James, a person who has full control over his tongue can be said to be in control of his whole self. Since the tongue is so difficult to control, anyone who controls it perfectly gains control of himself in all other areas of life as well.”¹ He compared the tongue with the bit into the mouth of horses, a small piece of metal but can control the horse, or a huge ship amidst stormy seas can be steered in any direction by a small rudder. He also compared the tongue to a tiny spark that can set the whole forest on fire. From people’s tongues, relationship and marriages can be broken, murders or killings committed and even wars can spark with a word of lies and hurt ego of leaders.

¹ livingspace.sacredspace.ie

My sisters and brothers, James is very simple in his message but very essential in living our Christian values. “We can offend by telling lies or by suppressing truth that should be revealed. We can utterly destroy people’s reputations, apart from the harm that our negative attitudes do to ourselves. And one wonders what kind of compensation we should or can give to those who have been seriously hurt by our irresponsible words? At the same time, there is so much good we can do, so much upbuilding of others that can be done by the way we speak, by our being generous in praise and encouraging words. The gift of speech is exactly that, a wonderful gift which can do so much good.”² So, use our tongue to praise and thank the Lord, encouraging words to uplift others who are depressed, lonely and sad, and stop hurting others by the words we say, or telling lies and stop gossiping. May the Word of God live in us, say only good words to others and we can find satisfaction and contentment only in Jesus Christ like what Peter, James and John experienced in the Transfiguration of Jesus. They experienced the love of God, and they like to stay there for ever. May we be instruments of good words and deeds for our brothers and sisters. Let the word we speak are words of love, forgiveness, honesty, and encouragement.

² ibid