

Homily for June 14, 2019
Friday 10th Week of Ordinary Time

Today we hear one of Jesus' one-liners:

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. (Matthew 5:29)¹

Pluck out an eye? Lop off a hand? Imagine how the disciples' jaws must have dropped when Jesus said this! His point, however, wasn't that self-mutilation is a necessary step to holiness. It's that God craves our holiness. The purity and faithfulness that he intends for us are worth more, even, than a sound, whole body.

God has called you, after all, to be holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:15). Jesus' life in you, his holiness, is a treasure you carry within yourself. And so, he says, if something threatens that holiness, get rid of it. Throw it away. It's better to do without something than to have it and to sin because you do. A book or magazine, a picture, a porn site, or movie—if lust rises up because of it, discard it. Thoughts that lead you to sin—turn away from them; don't entertain them.

However this call to holiness is hard, as Paul teaches in today's reading.

At present, our human bodies are frail and corruptible, like jars made of clay. The difference between earthenware and **treasure** points to the distinction between the perishable nature of our bodies and the imperishable riches of grace they contain.

The Catechism in referring to this passage states:

Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, we receive the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God." We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death.² This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin.²

It is this human weakness that both Paul and Jesus are pointing out to us today.

Paul is using a cultic expression from the OT that refers to the sacred vessels in which sin offerings were cooked (Lev 6:28). In a similar way, we carry the sacrificial "death of Jesus" (2 Cor 4:10) in our suffering bodies as we die to sin and live to righteousness.

But remember holiness is not just about cutting things out of your life. There are other ways you can preserve and foster holiness. Pick up the Scriptures and read—maybe the story of Jesus' death or a passage that declares your worth in God's sight (Matthew 26–28; Psalm 139). Write a note to remind yourself that you are "created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of

¹ <https://wau.org/meditations/>

² Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed., p. 357). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

truth” (Ephesians 4:24). Sit quietly in prayer and ask the Lord to show you something about the depth of his love for you.

St. Paul refers to the grace and faith as a treasure that is the power of God’s love. We don’t have the strength in ourselves to become holy, but it is Christ in us, at work through the sacraments, especially of Eucharist and Reconciliation that helps us to discover the extraordinary great power that comes from God and not from us.

So remember beloved by God, that Jesus earnestly desires you to be holy, and so he is intent on reaching out to help you. So when you are facing temptation and the allure of sin, cry out to him. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you his grace and to help you grow in the fruit of self-control. And if you do fall to temptation, don’t despair. God still loves you. No distance, no depth of sin, is ever beyond his reach. He is always ready to forgive you, even if you commit the same sin again and again. Never hesitate to run to him. He will shower you with his mercy—and the grace to live a holy life.