

Freed from the Prison of self

Homily for April 27, 2022

Our first reading begins by stating:

Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy,

Here are men who are claiming to serve the living God but in actual fact they are serving themselves. They are filled with jealousy and this vice is directed at another group of men, who are not only serving the living God faithfully, but also the true High Priest Jesus Christ. So listen now to the contrast as the angel directs the imprisoned apostles, Peter and John, with these words:

19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, 20 “Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.”

What a different motivation. The high priest and the Sadducees are motivated by jealousy whereas Peter and John are motivated by the words of Jesus, the one who is Life.

As we live each day of this Easter Season we are invited to examine our own consciences. Jesus came into the world so that through him we might have life. For his words are Life and offer us true freedom, as our Gospel so clearly expresses:

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

However when our interior lives are marked by attitudes characterized as jealousy there is no room for Jesus' words to germinate and take root in our souls. Our insecurities can lead us to look at others with suspicion and like the religious high priest and his colleagues religion is used not to bring freedom; rather it is a way to control and manipulate those who are under the leader's authority. This is why the worst kind of corruption is religious corruption because it is so contrary to the words of this Life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus therefore invites us to take to heart the daily examination our consciences. We have to examine our motives and attitudes in relation to others by the light that is Jesus Christ. This is why today's Gospel says:

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21 But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

This is such an honest assessment of our human condition. We have a built in resistance, because of original sin, to come into the light and life that are in Christ Jesus. This is because when our interior life is filled with dark, negative and envious attitudes we don't want these things to be

exposed. However when we choose to do the hard but restorative work of interior examination we want to come into the light so that we can rise up with Christ and live under his gracious and yet penetrating and loving gaze. He invites us to set right our souls so that we do not use our faith as a means of controlling others but of proclaiming in word and action that there is no condemnation in Christ but a true liberty that frees us from the prison of self, so that we can live and speak as men and women who have come into the light of Resurrection Truth and Resurrection Grace.