

INTRODUCTION

This week we continue to focus our prayer on giving attention to the different realities around us by being sensitive to the needs of our society in fighting the misery of the majority of our people through evangelization, not only in words, but evangelizing in action that brings justice to all.

The Pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in the Philippines states that while poverty and corruption are real and great evils; we must search for their causes. Our culture has been contaminated by the twofold greed for money and power that has characterized much of the modern world. In our consumerist and materialistic society, people are valued according to what they have. The first casualty of such greed for money and power is the truth. To get money and power, to increase their money and power, people have recourse to lies and cheating. The truth is easily disregarded and sacrificed. The culture of greed of money and power caters to the selfish interest of individuals, families and economic and political groups. Our families which are characterized by an admirable closeness are also characterized by a closedness that is unmindful of the common good. This being closed to the common good is especially evident in our politics where political dynasties are nurtured and people vote with little consideration for the impact on the country of their votes. But even our mass media are often tools of vested interests rather than instruments for the promotion of the common good. In business, in politics, in the entertainment business, in media, profit almost always has priority over

service despite protestation to the contrary.

Pope Francis warns us “almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 54).

The renewal of our country demands us all, and especially of you, our lay faithful, a return to truthfulness of the sense of the common good. Are you willing to seek what is right, speak what is right, and do what is right and to do so “in love” in solidarity with and service for the others?

MONDAY

Greed and Selfishness

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting

shadow. In the exercise of His will he brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. (**James 1: 12-18**)

If we only have the confidence that God knows and provides our needs, greed and selfishness has no place in our society. Let us guard our hearts against any doubts on the capacity of God to take care of His people. Are you convinced of this truth?

TUESDAY

Truth Suffers

Consider it all my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuit will fade away. (**James 1:2-11**)

When we don’t have enough faith and instead full of doubts that God

will give whatever we ask in His time, we lose the endurance of waiting and instead will resort to lies and cheating to get in an instant what we want. The world of today is in the culture of rat-race. Everyone seems to be in a hurry because of fear that we might run out of time, treasure and power. We develop a mind of scarcity which result to compromising the truth. After all, none of these things will last and not a guarantee to perfection of happiness.

What do you ask God today? Do you have enough faith that He will give what you are asking for?

WEDNESDAY

Common good is ignored

Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” And He warned them to tell no one about Him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priest and the scribes, and be killed, and after, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.

(**Mark 8: 27-33**)

If only all people have known Jesus and are interested in His teachings, they will not set their interest on themselves alone, but also for others. If they only knew Jesus, they will not accumulate the wealth which is intended for the common good. Pope Francis wrote, "When power, luxury and money become idols, they take priority over the need for a fair distribution of wealth. Our consciences thus need to be converted to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing".

We lay faithful, are invited to always consider the common good by being true to our commitment in work, in our discipleship and in our commitment to God.

THURSDAY

Compassion to the outcry of the poor and the needy.

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a

result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS", and he was called the friend of God. You see that man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **(James 2: 14-24)**

A lot of people are losing hope because of poverty. Not only poverty in material things but also morally and spiritually. Because of poverty in material things, people have resorted to immorality just to address their needs which led them to spiritual poverty, not recognizing the love of God. We are invited not to be blind and deaf of what's going on around us. Let us profess our faith through action. Let us show to them the face of Jesus that's full of compassion to their cry by sharing to them what we have received materially and spiritually. Let's give them the greatest treasure of all, the boundless confidence in God and to do always His will.

FRIDAY

Return to truthfulness and the sense of the common good.

And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees walking around." Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. And He

sent him to his home saying, "Do not even enter the village". **(Mark 8:22-26)**

How many times we become witness to an injustice done to the poor and the needy but preferred to keep silent? How many times we've seen a scene of taking advantages to the helpless but chose to close our eyes? How many times we become blind to the cry of these people? What's the use of our eyes if our hearts remain blind? Let us ask Jesus to touch the eyes of our hearts and have the courage to tell the truth and act for the common good.

SATURDAY

Speaking the truth in a spirit of love

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free".

(John 8:31-32)

¹⁵ If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head... **(Ephesians 4:15-16)**

If we truly believe in Jesus, then we are to proclaim the joy of the Gospel especially to the people who are still ignorant of it. Only in His Words we can be liberated from lies and deception of the world.

SUNDAY READINGS

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 17-18

Psalm: Psalm 103

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

***"We must seek the truth, speak the truth, do the truth in love. "
(cf. Ephesians 4:15)***

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Objective of the week:

That as lay faithful, we can return to truthfulness and be able to foster a sense of the common good.