

HOMILY 8TH SUN OT YRC 2019

In the Gospel reading today Jesus tells us that what we store in our heart determines if we are a good or an evil person. I think it is helpful if we look at our heart as having two compartments. The first contains a savings account. We want to put into our savings account all the things that we want to hang on to. In the other container is a toilet. You want to put all of the things you want to get rid of into this container and flush them away. So what do you want to put into your savings account? I would say: the Word of God; your relationship with God; what you have learned from Jesus regarding how to love; all of the acts of kindness that you have received from other people; all of the good example that you have received from others so that when a similar circumstance comes up with you, you will know a really good response; all of the wisdom you have gained over the years. I think we have a pretty easy time identifying what to put into our savings account.

Next, let's talk about what we want to flush down the drain. When you think about it we will probably have a pretty easy time identifying these things as well, but some of this goes against our natural inclinations so we need to be very purposeful about it. First of all, we need to flush away all of the anger and resentment we feel toward others. Anger and resentment are feelings. They are our reaction to what happens to us. Our feelings are not sinful or immoral, they just are. These are normal feelings, but they become a problem when you put them in your savings account. When we feel anger or resentment toward someone we want to get even. We want to punish the person. That takes different forms. Maybe it is the silent treatment. Is that going to help the situation? There is no way you are going to work things out if you are not speaking. And sometimes I am giving you the silent treatment and you do not even care. That makes me even angrier. Maybe you do something to get even. If I punish you is that going to

improve the situation? It will probably just escalate things because the other person will probably want to pay you back. Psychology 101, punishment does not change behavior, positive reinforcement of good behavior does. Or maybe you want to just gossip about the person. I am going to tell everyone the horrible things you have done. Pope Francis equates gossip with murder. You are murdering the person's reputation and you can never take it back. Flush the anger and resentment. It may take a few flushes but do not put it into your savings account.

Another thing that we need to flush down the drain is judging others. This is a natural inclination as well. When we see someone for the first time we look at their appearance and some of the superficial things we can observe and we make some judgments. But then you want to flush it down the drain. Give them a chance. Do not put your superficial judgment in your savings account. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus points out that sometimes we can see the splinter in someone else's eye but we cannot see the wooden beam in our own. Sometimes we think we are much better at examining someone else's conscience than examining our own. I think there is a reason for that. When we look at our own behavior we are also seeing all of the excuses, all of the rationalizations, all of the reasons why we did the awful thing that we did. We do not necessarily see that when we look at the actions of someone else, but is our behavior less sinful?

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that the good tree bears good fruit and the good person produces good. The rotten tree bears rotten fruit. The evil person produces evil. And a tree never produces fruit for itself, it produces fruit to be consumed by others. Whether we produce good or evil depends upon what we put in our savings account. So be careful what you save. The good or evil you produce is what you will share with others around you.