

Fr. Simon Sez

This Sunday is Catholic Family Sharing Appeal 2022 Commitment Sunday. It can be difficult for us to make commitments and even more difficult to keep them. Due to the difficulty in keeping commitments, it makes us very careful in making them, or at least, it should.

Why do we need commitments? It would be worth every individual reflecting on this question and on how to be careful in making the right commitments!

Life is tough and full of suffering. Jesus Christ makes it possible for we Christians to get through life, not give up, and be the victors. Jesus leads the victory over sin and death, by going through it with us, being triumphant by the power of the Resurrection, and being the Way, Truth, & Life for us to share in His Victory! (Prayerfully, read the Book of Revelation. Don't let the imagery and difficulty in understanding prevent you from learning and being convinced we share in the Victory of Christ if we remain faithful to Him through suffering and death into Eternal Life!)

Jesus Christ taught us that we must take up our cross and follow Him. By the Mercy and Grace of God, commitment to Him, His Church, our parishes, our loved ones and other commitments is what it takes to do this!

To make the right commitments takes making faithful, Christian decisions. This, at a minimum, requires knowing ourselves and other people, discernment, and other factors. The Sunday readings for this Sunday teach us a very important way for getting to know what is in our hearts and the hearts of others. The words from our mouths can reveal what is in our hearts, for better or for worse. We can help others realize this about themselves by charitably reflecting back to them what they have said. We must be very careful to try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt and keep our possible interpretations positive for ourselves and for others.

As far as discernment, this takes great skill, practice, and spiritual direction from others. I gave a talk to Sacred Heart Parish evening youth disciples at YFF last Wednesday. My presentation was recorded using Livestream. It is available through the Sacred Heart Parish website by clicking on livestreamed Masses. I will have handouts available in our church entrances. After Lent, I will have the opportunity to give a presentation to St. Pius X Parish YFF disciples in middle and high school.

LENT REGULATIONS FOR CATHOLICS

All Fridays throughout the year, especially during Lent, are penitential days. Abstinence: All who have reached their 14th birthday are to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Fasting: All those who are 18 or older, until their 59th birthday, are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is one full meal and two lesser meals without eating between meals.

ANNUAL MASS ATTENDANCE SURVEY

Mass attendance counts will be taken at all Sunday Masses (including Saturday vigils) during upcoming weekends March 12-13, 19-20, & 26-27, 2022. The data collected in this annual survey has been shown on many occasions to be helpful in explaining decisions or lending essential context to decisions that are made both at the parish and diocesan levels.

Heart & Mouth: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time



Sirach 27:4–7
Psalm 92:2–3, 13–16
1 Corinthians 15:54–58
Luke 6:39–45

In today's readings we hear Jesus speaking in Galilee as well as a Jewish sage named Sirach writing in Jerusalem more than a century earlier. The two of

them touch upon a single truth: The words that come out of us make known the hidden thoughts within us. Speech reveals the secrets of the heart.

Sirach teaches that speaking is "the test of men" and their character. One who is upright will utter words that are truthful and encouraging to others. But one whose heart is cluttered with "refuse" will be exposed, since the "fruit" of his mouth speaks volumes about the "tree" that produces it. Sirach also compares the testing of our words to clay fired in a kiln—if properly prepared, a useful vessel emerges; but if the clay is not fully dried, it will break apart in the extreme heat.

In a similar way, Jesus insists that a person speaks "out of the abundance of the heart." He too compares our speech, whether good or bad, to what grows on a tree: "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit."

Both readings urge us to make wholesome speech a habit. After all, much about who we are is brought to light through what we say. But there's an additional step: The Lord is asking us to look inward, to examine our hearts and fill them with the "good treasure" that God desires.

Why do purity of heart and speech matter so much? Because, as Jesus declares elsewhere: "by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). They matter because they help to decide our final judgment, and this is where the Second Reading comes in. Paul reminds us that God will destroy death forever, and if we are to share in this victory and live forever with the Lord, then we must take all steps necessary to give our hearts and lips to what is good.

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