

**Homily – Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
San Fernando Cathedral – February 27, 2022**

Those of us who are a little older know how the world has changed throughout our lifetime. We were born at a time when ideologies tried to put reason above all else, even faith. We are now at a time when feelings are turned into an idol. If I feel something, it becomes unquestionable, even if it makes no sense or has no connection with reality. We are corruptible and we make mistakes – as Saint Paul says – but the fact that we can communicate and understand each other shows that we can know the truth. Things are the way they are regardless of what I feel.

The book of Sirach reminds us today – in the first reading – that when we communicate with someone, we must reflect and deepen. We must not simply react. This means that we must examine our feelings and the reasons that motivate them, to develop our judgment, consistent with the faith, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We must examine what we hear as flour is passed through a strainer. *“When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear...”* We must avoid prejudices, stereotypes and elitist or exclusionary attitudes, so as not to fall into the temptation of trying to reaffirm our identity by treating with disdain those who think differently. We belong to Christ and to his Church, above groups, parties or ideologies.

That is why the Lord is so harsh with his disciples: *“You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother’s eye.”* We have to ask the Holy Spirit for his gifts of wisdom and counsel to be able to recognize the good tree for its good fruit. Saint Paul says that the good fruits are *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity,*

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal 5: 22-23). Many conflicts would be avoided if we were more capable of judging ideas and actions truthfully, without lacking in charity.

It is essential to understand that we are the ones who cause conflicts. Peace is a gift from God. This week we begin Lent with Ash Wednesday. The Pope has summoned the whole world to dedicate that day to ask God for peace, through prayer, fasting and sacrifices. Let us be in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, so that the Lord unites the current sufferings of that country with his own sacrifice on the Cross. Through the merits of Christ, may God grant Ukraine an end to the hostilities it is suffering, and a stable and lasting peace for the whole world.

Today we heard Saint Paul reminding us that we live awaiting to be able to clothe ourselves with incorruptibility. We thank God that he has already granted us “victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We must remain firm and unshakable in faith and love, to reach the fruit of our hope. Death will be defeated and we will be immensely happy. All the desires of our hearts will be satisfied, but we must persevere, and Lent is an opportunity to redouble our efforts.

We must continue learning from the Teacher, until we can be as merciful as our Heavenly Father. Lent helps us be formed following Jesus on the way to Calvary, in order to be partakers of the fruits of his resurrection in the eternal Easter. Our model is Jesus, not the “wise men” of this world. And the path is mercy, by which we become part of God’s family, overcoming human divisions.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe intercede for us, so that through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of her Son, Jesus, everything is transformed and peace reigns.