

Sixth Sunday After the Nativity – Loneliness

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
February 19, 2017
Gospel Reading: John 7:39-52*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The tongue is an amazing muscle and organ. St. James in his epistle writes,

“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing”. (3:7-10a)

We see how words are so important and influential upon people, especially children. One wrong word or phrase or tone can affect a child for the rest of their lives.

Words originate in our hearts and are produced when air, from our lungs, travels up through our throat and through our vocal chords. They then proceed from our mouth, shaped by our tongue, moving through the air and ultimately touching another’s heart. Every syllable can be used to encourage or discourage; to build up or to knock down; to give life or to drain life from another.

In today’s Gospel reading, we hear how Jesus is preaching to the multitudes in the temple, when He exclaims that He is the living water and all who come to Him and drink, will never be thirsty again. The guards, who were sent to arrest Him returned to the high priests and Pharisees and were asked, “Why didn’t you bring Him back?” The guards answered, “No one has ever spoken like this man” (John 7:46).

The guards realized that Jesus was saying something very different from what they were used to hearing. Remember, Jesus was not the first Messiah to come to town. There had been many Messiahs before Him, but what made Him different was what He was saying. He spoke opposite of what the world preaches, namely comfort. The world preaches fear. This includes, but is not limited to, governments, companies, organizations, society, hierarchies, people in power and who hold positions. They scare us into submission. For fear does many things: we do not think straight, we worry and become anxious, we make mistakes. What is most terrifying, fear makes us feel lonely.

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Man is a social being and we crave communion and relationships with others. God recognized this when He created Adam and said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18), thus He created Eve. Yet there are still so many who live in loneliness today. They search for a shoulder to lean on, an ear to listen and a hand to hold.

Loneliness is dangerous because it is then, when we feel isolated from others and even God, that Satan whispers in our ears. Let us not confuse loneliness with silence. It is in silence when God speaks and in loneliness when Satan speaks. Satan tells us in our loneliness that we are worthless, unloved, sinful and hopeless.

Of course these are all lies, for nothing that comes out of his mouth is true, but many believe him. They believe him because there is no one near to say that they have worth, that they are loved, they are forgiven of their sins and they have hope of in the resurrection. Satan distorts reality and makes us believe falsehoods and removes us even further from communion and relations with each other and God.

Unfortunately there are those that are so lonely and who hear only the devil, that they take their lives and commit suicide. This is a reality which we must not avoid or ignore. We have this impression that suicide happens to teenagers or college students who are under a lot of pressure or are being bullied. This does happen, but it is most definitely not regulated to only this demographic.

Personally, in my ministry alone, I have interacted with parishioners who have spoken about suicide from the ages of 12 to 72 and in every case, the reason why they wanted to commit suicide was loneliness. They felt that there was no one willing to listen.

My dear faithful, we have been blessed with tongues to speak Christ’s life-giving word to those who need to hear it. Let us use our words to comfort the lonely and encourage the distraught. The next time we see someone sitting by themselves or disconnected from those around, let us hear him/her screaming for help and words of love, peace, hope and life.

Amen.