

Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
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Mass of the Charismatic Conference
St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Orange Park, Fla.
Sunday, January 29, 2012

Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35; Mark 1: 21-28

“If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.”

Have you noticed how damaging lies are to relationships? Have you noticed how damaging hypocrisy is to work well as a team? Have you noticed how “unfaithfulness” breaks up trust in couples who were “vowed” to one another? Have you noticed how gossip destroys reputations and good morale?

All would agree with me that when words do not matter, trusting one another is no longer possible.

In all of us, there is a thirst for truth. Jesus matters in our lives: “I am the truth, the way and the life.” He is the prophet, the teacher who speaks with authority. If you stand by the truth, you abide by the truth; you listen to God’s Word, his truth!

“If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart!”

The prophet, Jesus, has given us the anointing of the Holy Spirit in virtue of our baptism and confirmation.

As the first letter of John 2 – 26 says I have written to you thinking in those who were trying to deceive you; keep the anointing that you received...

When we were adolescents, to be free in our mind was to do what we please, I want this, and I want that. But after several years when we reach more spiritual maturity, then for us freedom is essentially living in the truth, following the commandments. Therefore I am truly free when I obey the word of God. Obedience and freedom match when you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus teaches with authority. At the time of Jesus, the teachers then (the scribes) complicated people’s lives with multiple rules. Jesus taught the freedom of the children of God; for those who abide in the Spirit – abide in freedom; for the Spirit, in the role of an inner mentor, teaches us from within. Praying to the Holy Spirit is

so simple, *Come Holy Spirit - Come Holy Spirit*. And when one is attuned to the Spirit one is able to make multiple decisions attuned to God's will.

The Gospel today shows how Jesus' words heal the sick, and Jesus heals all oppressions. He has the authority to deliver this sick person from evil forces.

When we come to the Sacrament of reconciliation – we hear the awesome words “I forgive you.”

St. Paul had it right when he said the past is gone, live for the present and the future.

This same St. Paul had participated in the martyrdom of Deacon Steven as one of the killers. King David had the same fate he truly regretted killing the soldier to acquire his own wife all of this both Paul and David were healed deeply by the Lord and became new men because the truth overcomes the shame. Heal me Oh Lord – so that I might become a new man, abiding in your truth, abiding in freedom!

Conclusion

When we celebrate the Mass we are fed by the two tables. It is regrettable that at times we miss the significance of the table of the Word. Because the Word of God penetrates deep into our hearts, and if we are open to it, the Word heals the deep wounds, self-centeredness, grudges, addictions etc. That hinders us to forgive. The listening of the word of God enables us to say yes to Jesus in communion because the word is the light and the meaning to our partaking of the body of Christ.

If today you hear the Word, harden not your heart!