



8th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Date: Sunday, March 2, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Sirach 27:4–7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 92:2–3, 13–16 | **Response:** Psalm 92:2a

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:54–58

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 2:15d, 16a

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:39–45

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

The words we speak, the judgments we make, the way we see the world—these are not accidents of speech or perception, but the fruit of our hearts.

And so, we must ask ourselves: what do they reveal? For words are not mere sounds that vanish in the wind; they are echoes of the soul, the unmistakable testimony of what lies within.

The Book of Sirach tells us, “The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had; so too does one’s speech disclose the bent of one’s mind.” A truth as old as time itself: if we want to understand a person, we need only listen. The ancient rabbis knew this well. They taught that the tongue is like a key—it unlocks the secrets of the heart. But this is not a lesson for idle reflection; it is a challenge, a charge, a call to arms. If our words are sharp, bitter, brimming with resentment, what does that say of the fortress of our soul? If we whisper gossip in hushed tones, if we sneer in quiet judgment, if we stand in silence while injustice runs rampant, then we are not bystanders—we are participants.

The Psalmist rises like a trumpet blast, declaring, “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High.” Why? Because the grateful heart cannot help but proclaim its joy. Those who walk in the ways of the Lord bear fruit that lasts, “flourishing like a palm tree,” unshaken by the storms that rage. This is the mark of the true disciple—not a life without hardship, but a heart that remains steadfast, a faith that cannot be toppled.

And then, we come to Christ. He stands before us, unflinching, unwavering. “A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.” This is no parable of comfort. It is a summons, a verdict, an unyielding demand for honesty. He calls us not to half-measures, not to polite virtue, not to outward displays of piety—but to transformation. He warns us: beware of hypocrisy, beware of the illusion that one can correct the world without first correcting oneself. “Remove the plank from your own eye,” He says, “then you will see clearly.” Here is wisdom, piercing as a sword. St. Ignatius of Loyola speaks of the need for interior freedom—the ability to see ourselves truly before God, to act with wisdom, to love with sincerity. If we do not face the darkness within, how can we bring light to others?

We need only look around to see the urgency of this message. The world groans under the weight of division, of selfishness disguised as strength, of injustice tolerated for the sake of convenience. We see leaders who speak without wisdom, who tear down rather than build up. We see corruption that flourishes in silence, and suffering that is ignored. And yet, we are not called to despair. No, we are called to action. Catholic Social Teaching does not offer us comfortable abstractions—it commands us to recognize that justice is not an idea but a duty. We cannot demand righteousness from others while excusing our own faults. We cannot preach mercy while harboring resentment. We cannot speak of love while turning away from our neighbor’s need.

Look to St. Oscar Romero. He did not live in a time of ease, nor did he preach to those eager to listen. He spoke truth in the face of oppression, not with bitterness, not with anger, but with unshakable conviction. He did not remain silent, but neither did he speak with hatred. He let his heart be shaped by the Gospel, and from that heart came words that bore lasting fruit.

So I ask you—what kind of fruit are we bearing? In our homes, do we speak words that heal or words that wound? In our workplaces, do we bring honesty and integrity, or do we compromise for convenience? In our communities, do we have the courage to name injustice, to defend the dignity of the poor, to see and respond to suffering?

If today’s readings are a mirror, then let us not look away. Let us face them with courage. And so, as we leave here today, let us - along with praying for Pope Francis who is in hospital - take these questions to prayer:

- What do my words reveal about my heart? Do they reflect love, gratitude, and truth—or something else?
- Where am I being called to remove the plank from my own eye, to grow in humility and self-awareness before correcting others?
- How can I use my voice to bear good fruit in my community—to uplift the poor, to speak for justice, to proclaim the mercy of Christ?

May we be bold. May we be wise. May we, by the grace of God, bear fruit that endures.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.