

## 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 10, 2018

Beloved brothers and sisters, the readings of today direct our attention to the fall of Adam and Eve with its consequences. Paul calls on all Christians not to be discouraged, but to proclaim their faith even in the face of persecution.

Jesus warns us to be far from blasphemy – and never to be engaged in the sins against the Holy Spirit. Since many of us are unaware of what constitutes blasphemy and sins against the Holy Spirit, I think it will be good if we take some educational steps to review what the Bible teaches about these things. The aim is that we may know goodness through discernment and become good by divine assistance. The days of the blame game are over.

“Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness but is guilty of an everlasting sin.” Matthew 12:31-32

Blasphemy can be described as an intentional, purposeful act or speech of sacrilege, profane, irreverence to God, persons, places or things regarded as holy or claiming the self to be God. In the Bible, blasphemy includes calling the name of God in vain, or casual irreverent speech about God; Deuteronomy 5:11; Numbers 35:9-34, it includes irreverence to holy places, persons or things; Leviticus 24:10-12, Numbers 12:1-12.

In the Old Testament, “whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregations shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.” Leviticus 24:10-16. The Holy Spirit teaches us of only the truth and reminds us of only the truth. John 14:26

In the Christian Bible, thank goodness Jesus did not base blasphemy on the punishment of death, but on the grace of forgiveness. But He warned everybody to stay clear of the sins against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy in of itself is against the person, nature and mission of the Holy Spirit. It is in the person, nature and mission to teach, remind and remain. Therefore, to purposefully, consistently and continually deny that which one knows to be true and or affirms that which is known to be false, cannot be forgiven in as much as the person is still freely and knowingly remains in such self-imposed error. Now, people, out of lack of knowledge or full understanding, their relationship with God may error even against Jesus and be forgiven. For instance, most disciples of Jesus know him to have come from God, but rejected that he is the Son of God and therefore God himself. Matthew 28:17

(This impediment of faith was removed with the descent of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2-1-13) For this reason, the Lord did not teach that every blasphemy leads to damnation, but those ones which are knowingly placed against the foundation of faith, knowledge and understanding.

In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, there are laid down conditions for becoming a Christian and receiving the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian, a person must first repent and accept baptism. But to receive the Holy Spirit, a person must accept that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, such Christians must give their will and lives to Jesus even to the point of death. Jesus in turn assures them eternal salvation. John 6:35-68; 17:20-26

So, if after this pact a person freely and knowingly apostasies by rejecting the goodness of God, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and the salvific mission of Christ, that person has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. \*\* CCC2148 defines blasphemy as “speaking against God”, but John Paul II called blasphemy “the refusal to accept salvation”. He testified that blasphemy does not properly consist in the offense against the Holy Spirit in words, it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit, working through the power of the cross. Dominum et Vivificantem no 46. For instance, anyone who denounces even the hope of forgiveness and, therefore, refuses to repent of their sins and blasphemes. Hence, the letter to the Hebrews testify that “there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been revealed to us. Hebrews 10:20; Revelation 20:14-15

Personally, I don't call these blasphemes unpardonable because the Lord himself seeks for our repentance from them. Hence, if we repent and denounce our evil ways, He will not only pardon us but will restore us to our former glory. For the Lord is loving, merciful and forgiving to all who ask of him. But if some people choose willingly to live in error, the Lord will honor their choice and their freedom to wander to the end of their choice. Revelation 20:14-15

The teaching of the Church concerning blasphemy and what may constitute "unpardonable sins" against the Holy Spirit may be lined-up in part as follows: deliberate refusal to accept God's love, mercy and forgiveness, which can be demonstrated by acts of despair, presumption, a firm determination not to repent also called impenitence, resisting divine truth known to be such, obstinacy, envy of others in spiritual welfare. Desperation is contrary to hope. A desperate person ceases to hope for salvation from God and lacks reliance on any help from the Holy Spirit. CCC #1817

Whoever presumes that he/she can save their selves outside the grace of God and without true conversion, blasphemes against the mission of the Holy Spirit. CCC2092.

Many who freely and willingly resist and refuse the gifts of conversion and repentant work of the Holy Spirit, truly stand in his way of evangelization. CC14:30-33

Those who know the divine truth but refuse it and teach others to refuse it will be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 5:19; CCC2089

Persistence in error is contrary to the rational mind, obstinacy encourages persistence in error, thereby blocking the light of the Holy Spirit which brings knowledge. Luke 12:47

Envy of others' spiritual gifts is actually a sin against the giver, that in the Holy Spirit. Envy is toying the route of Satan who envy brought death into the world CCCno2538; Wisdom 2:24.

We should be appreciative of all we have and be thankful Ez: 28:11-19

Having reviewed the sins against the Holy Spirit and having been warned that they are unpardonable, how do we reconcile the passage: "but whoever speaks evil against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come". Matthew 12:32, with our reliance on God's infinite love, mercy and forgiveness for our salvation? For Jesus taught his church that "God so loved the world that he gave only Son, that whoever believed in him should not perish but have eternal life". John 3:16. How do we reconcile unpardonable sin of human beings to the infinite mercy of God? I think that the divine goodness demands human response and participation. Hence, Jesus taught his disciples about the reciprocal nature of love; if you love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

Our salvation is also rooted on human free will. Moses, toward the end of his life, gathered the elder of Israel and said to them: "I call Heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life that you and your off springs may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to Him for He is your life and the length of your days ... Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Those who want to be saved may accept salvation and the terms of salvation. Salvation is not forced, it is given but must be received and lived. Salvation in Christ Jesus is meant to be practical. For Christians, only those who believe in their hearts and profess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord will be saved. Romans 10:9. The consolation is that the Lord is eternally merciful and forgiving, so seek your salvation while you can, seek for the Lord while He may be found call on Him while He is near. Isaiah 55:6. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. May we not join the wicked and blasphemous because they seem successful and free. We know the truth, let us live in the truth.