

8th Sunday Ordinary Time “C”

February 26-27, 2022

Readings: Sirach 27:4-7; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; Luke 6:39-45

If today’s readings do not sound familiar, it is because this by the last week of February, we are often in Lent. As a result, the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time is often bumped to after Easter and likely to be replaced by Corpus Christi or Trinity Sunday, such that it is not readings you hear every three years. So, it is worth delving in briefly.

“Every tree is known by its fruit.” One of our staff members gathered some of the fruit from our Malus ‘White Angel’ Crabapple trees. They produce beautiful white blossoms that last but a week or two at most, **if** it is not windy. Many wedding parties, even high school prom couples, take photos in our courtyard in May. With the help of a valued staff member, the fruit from those trees has been made into wine. Only after a year, will we find out what kind of fruit they produce! I hope that I get first sip.

Spiritually, the lesson here is simple. We can say the right things and have all the best appearance, but where we are most known is in the spiritual fruit that comes forth from our actions, known by all, seen by all. We know that appearances can be deceiving– words can be cheap.

This past week, under the guise of a “peacekeeping” force, President Putin invaded a sovereign nation that did nothing to provoke this war of aggression. The rotten fruit of his aggression carries a heavy cost to the Ukrainian people. Fittingly, the Pope has asked that this coming Ash Wednesday be a day of prayer and fasting for Ukraine. I agree 100%.

When it comes to knowing someone by the fruit of their actions, we are presented an opportunity each year to show forth our support for a wide variety of ministries within this Archdiocese. Today is Catholic Services Appeal Commitment weekend. The twenty ministries supported by the Appeal cover many aspects of Church life, from por-life to education, from mission and vocations, but especially those most in need in society.

In many cases, the best way to help is through organizations with access to resources. It is only natural that some ministries are more familiar to us, or perhaps we share a closer affinity with some of them. Others may be less on our radar. But all the supported groups do important work.

For years, our **hospital chaplains** operated below the radar. Not so today! The faithful have witnessed their work in these past two years, seeing it is a new light, as also our Anointing Corps. Some hospitals do not budget for a priest on staff. The CSA helps. Our **Venezuelan Mission** has persevered in dire of political/financial straits. **Abria** supports during pregnancy, so that women who make the choice for life are never alone.

And in those times when individuals need healing specifically because of abortion, **Rachel's Vineyard** is there, providing a non-judgmental and healing environment. Couples who are preparing for marriage here at the Cathedral attend a wonderful **pre-marriage retreat** offered through the Archdiocese. CSA funds help to support that program, so that the cost for the weekend is reasonable. In short, twenty ministries receive grants.

Our seminarians receive tuition assistance, two college outreach programs are thriving in part through CSA support. Still, the majority who receive help you could say are on the peripheries. The CSA ministries help those most in need. The Lord is calling us today to remove the plank from our own eye before pointing the finger at another. We change the world one person at a time, beginning with ourselves. We help those in need.

As we look ahead to the beginning of Lent this week, may we use this time to take stock, to really look inward to make needed changes. Change cannot happen overnight; we will have the luxury of time if we choose to use it wisely. May God guard our speech, placing a sentry at the door of our lips.¹ Above all, may we honor God through our speech, and may our actions towards those in need show forth the fruit of our faith.

¹ Cf. Psalm 141:3