

Wednesday of the Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 23:27-32): Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth. Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the memorials of the righteous, and you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shedding the prophets' blood.' Thus you bear witness against yourselves that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets; now fill up what your ancestors measured out!"

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites”

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Today, as in the days before and the ones that follow, we see Jesus almost beside Himself, condemning attitudes that are incompatible with a life worthy of not only a Christian, but of any human being: “On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing” (Mt 23:28). He confirms for us that sincerity, honesty, loyalty, and integrity are virtues not only cherished by God but deeply valued by people as well.

To avoid falling into hypocrisy, I must first be very sincere. First, with God—because He wants me to be pure of heart, to abhor every lie, for He Himself is absolute purity, the fullness of Truth. Second, with myself—so that I am not the first to be deceived, risking sin against the Holy Spirit by refusing to acknowledge

my sins or confess them clearly in the sacrament of Penance. Or by failing to trust in God, who never condemns the prodigal son, and who never loses anyone simply for being a sinner, but only when we refuse to admit that we are sinners. Third, with others—because, like Jesus, we too are all repelled by lies, deceit, lack of sincerity, dishonesty, disloyalty, and lack of integrity. And so, we must apply that basic principle: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

These three attitudes—which we might even call simple common sense—we must make our own if we want to avoid hypocrisy. And at the same time, we must acknowledge that we need sanctifying grace, for original sin came into the world through the “father of lies”: the devil. This is why we should take to heart Saint Josemaría’s warning: “At the time of examination beware of the devil that ties your tongue.” We should also remember the words of Origen: “Every counterfeit holiness is dead, because it is not moved by God.” And above all, we must live by the clear and simple rule Christ Himself gave us: “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No’” (Mt 5:37).

Mary did not multiply her words. But her “yes” to grace, to the good, was unique and true; her “no” to sin, to evil, was total and sincere.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Men could not live with one another if there were not mutual confidence that they were being truthful to one another.” (Saint Thomas Aquinas)

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“A varnished putrefaction: this is the life of someone who is corrupt. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to flee from every form of deceit and to see ourselves as sinners. Sinners yes, corrupt no.” (Francis)

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“Christ's disciples have ‘put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.’ (Eph 4:24). By ‘putting away falsehood,’ (Eph 4:25) they are to ‘put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2475)

