

My Brothers and Sisters,

During Ordinary Time, the Sunday readings typically offer us multiple insights both into God and into ourselves.

Today's reading from Genesis recounts God's encounter with Adam and Eve after the original sin. Today's first reading reveals two consequences of original sin which still profoundly affect us. After they sinned, Adam and Eve hid from God because they were afraid, and they were afraid because they knew they were naked.

One of the consequences of the original sin was vulnerability. Prior to the original sin, the man and woman were able to be completely open to each other and to God. Today all of us are vulnerable, and we are most vulnerable to those who know us best and whom we love the most. The second consequence is that when God challenged them, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Like Adam and Eve, we often do not want to accept responsibility for our choices and want to blame others. Today the unwillingness to accept personal responsibility is not just an individual issue but a major societal issue.

At the same time, this reading offers hope. God promised us salvation in his words to the serpent: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."* This verse, Genesis 3:15, is often called the Proto-Evangelium or First Gospel, the First Good News.

In today's Gospel, Jesus' own relatives believed that he was out of his mind while the religious leaders thought he was possessed. Jesus responded by reminding them that a kingdom or house divided cannot stand. Therefore, at the Last Supper, Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers. As a Church and as a parish, if we are going to witness Christ to the world, we have to be united in faith, love, and hope. For example, one author argued that one of the biggest obstacles to Christianity in missionary countries are the divisions within Christianity itself, i.e., the various Christian churches fighting among each other over the same people.

Unity is equally important within families. Today we hear so much about dysfunctional families. Dysfunction does not refer to the presence or absence of problems but to how problems are addressed. Every family has disagreements and conflicts. As someone once said, marriage involves a new compromise every day. United families are able to resolve disagreements and conflicts constructively rather than destructively.

In today's Gospel, Jesus states that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to refuse the forgiveness, the mercy, of God in Jesus Christ. Because God will never force his love upon us, God cannot forgive us if we refuse his forgiveness.

The Gospel ends with people telling Jesus that his mother, his brothers, and his sisters are outside looking for him. He, then, asks them, *"Who are my mother and my brothers?"* Answering his own question, looking at his followers, he responds, *"Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."* Jesus is reminding us that as much as we are part of a physical family, we are also part of God's family.

My brothers and sisters, although Paul was writing to the Corinthians about the hardships of ministry, his words in today's second reading also invite us to hope. Even as we get older, our inner self is being renewed day by day if we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of God. Today's reading ends with a promise: *"For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven."*