

March 3, 2019

Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sir. 27: 4-7, 1 Cor. 15:54-58, Lk. 6:39-45

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“You hypocrite!” “Who me? No, I more readily see hypocrisy in you, in the political party that is not mine, in a family member, etc... Psychologists call this selective attention. On the positive side, it may even be prompted by my own attempts at self-improvement. Last Lent when I was trying not to be critical of others, I became increasingly aware of how many times I was tempted to criticize another – either privately in my head, or shared discretely with my husband, Jim. It seemed to be getting worse rather than better. I wondered if I was really increasing my criticisms or merely paying more attention to this bad habit.

So, yes, we can be blind to our own faults while seeing them plainly in others, OR we can beat ourselves up in the pursuit of virtue because we “over-see” the faults in ourselves. So what is one to do? Stop living? Admit that I am human? Get new glasses? Go on a silent retreat? Examine my own hypocrisy? Go to confession? Any of these options (save stop living) may be helpful, but I think it may be useful to not start with our eyes but rather to start with our ears.

For example: Perhaps we are blind to our own hypocrisy because we are so focused on being right or proving the other wrong. Sometimes the first step is to listen better to the person we disagree with or see at fault.

In these hyper-political days, we can probably choose almost any conflictual issue in our country, the world, or our Church – the environment, racism, abortion, immigration, gender discrimination, the sexual-abuse cover-up, clericalism, etc. There’s my position, my tribe’s position, my Church’s position – and then there’s the “wrong” position.

Mindfulness
Starts Here



What would happen if we truly listened with open ears and mind to the other’s position? It takes humility, patience, and putting aside my blinders to really listen well enough to see the needs, fears, and ultimate goodness in the other.

Here are some things that have been helpful to me:

1. Listen deeply to the other, continually trying to seek a common ground. Maybe we disagree on whether immigrants should freely be allowed to enter the country, but we can agree on the value of protecting the dignity of human lives. The disagreement is on the HOW, the methodology.
2. Remember that the other person is not inherently evil, but is loved by God no matter how hard it might be for me to see. Try to see with God’s eyes.
3. Hold on to your deepest values but be open to seeing a new way of accomplishing them.
4. Take the blinders off so that you can see your own hypocrisy well enough to see the good in the other.

For Marianists, we might especially exercise Mindfulness of Words as we remember Sirach's advice "One's speech discloses the bent of one's mind." (Sirach 27:7)