

The Homily for the Third Sunday in Lent

Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians approximately AD 60-61 and deals with a wide range of moral and ethical behaviours for the converts to Christianity to ensure that they are living up to their heavenly calling. In chapter 5 Paul urges them to be followers (imitators) of God, to walk as children of light, to walk in love, as Christ did, offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

God extends that same challenge to us today, as Paul's did in his letter to the Ephesians almost 2000 years ago. What was applicable then, is applicable to us today.

He warns them not to indulge or be associated with sexual immorality, all impurity and earthly vices.

Romans 6 tells us *'that the wages of sin is death, and the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* He goes on to say, don't associate with anyone who is adulterated, lest they deceive you with empty words, because now you are children of the light.

There's an old adage that says, *If you run with the hounds, you are bound to attract fleas*, and another one is, *if you hang out in a coal mine you will get dirty* and if you hang out with sinners you'll probably get dirty as well.

We are by no means faced with a small challenge to live up to our heavenly calling as there are just so many pitfalls in the world today that can easily sway our focus away from God, and suck us into the "darkness".

As we continue our Christian "walk" the temptation to get comfortable will always exist, and unwittingly, we are drawn into a life style, which overtime seems to be "right" and becomes part of our everyday life.

And as Bishop Michael alluded to last Sunday, these earthly vices can easily deceive and consume a person, to their detriment, and even their death.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells us to *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"*, and how many of us do that on a regular basis?

To expand on this topic, I am going to share a story with you titled "The Stranger" which Pat Kuiper circulated some time ago on our Robertson church "WhatsApp" group. Perhaps you have heard it before, nevertheless, it will emphasise on how easily one can swayed by other influences.

A few years after I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small town.

From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and soon invited him to live with our family.

The stranger was quickly accepted and was around from then on.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in my family. In my young mind, he had a special niche.

My parents were complementary instructors: Mom taught me good from evil, and Dad taught me to obey. But the stranger... he was our storyteller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries and comedies.

If I wanted to know anything about politics, history or science, he always knew the answers about the past, understood the present and even seemed able to predict the future!

He took me and my family around the world. He made me laugh, and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn't seem to mind. Sometimes, Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were shushing each other to listen to what he had to say, and she would go to the kitchen for peace and quiet. (I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave.) Dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honour them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our home - not from us, nor our friends or any visitors. Our long time visitor, however, got away with using four-letter words that burned my ears and made my dad squirm and my mother blush. My Dad didn't permit the liberal use of alcohol but the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished.

He talked freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I now know that my early concepts about relationships were influenced strongly by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked ... And was NEVER asked to leave.

More than fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in with our family. He has blended right in and is not nearly as fascinating as he was at first. Still, if you could walk into my parents' den today, you would still find him sitting over in his corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk, and watch him draw his pictures.

So what's his name?... Well, we just call him 'TV.'

I'm not suggesting that TV is all bad, I often watch selectively, but it's how you manage it to prevent it negatively influencing your life and those of your loved ones.

If you want to walk in the light, you need to have a meaningful and close relationship with God, free from earthly vices and it can't be ad-hoc. God needs to come first and foremost in your daily life!

Psalm 56:¹³ says; *"For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life."*

And perhaps today is a good time to ask yourself, how have you grown in your Christian life since you came to faith in Jesus Christ, how is my relationship with God, is he close or is he distant? Is my Lenten journey bringing me closer to our Lord Jesus Christ?

In asking that question this story comes to mind: *A boy asked his father – "Dad how big is God?" His father looked up at the sky and saw a jet passing by, pointing to it he asked his son; What is the size of this jet? The boy replied – it is very small, I can hardly see it.*

Later Dad took his son to the airport, and as he approached there was a Jet parked on the ground, he asked – now son how big is this jet?

He said, Wow dad, it is huge! to which his father replied:

God's size depends on how close or far you are from him. The closer you are to him, the Greater and Greater He will be in your life.

My prayer for you this Lenten period is that your daily walk with God will be characterised by unity, holiness, love, wisdom and faith.

Psalm 119:¹⁰⁵ - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.*

God bless and keep you – Amen



SEASON OF LENT