



Reflection from Ben Babaran

When I started preparing my reflection, my heart was full of mixed emotions. Somehow, I managed to quell them focusing on the instructions of this Sunday's readings. I know that on Sundays in Ordinary Time, the first reading which is from the Old Testament, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Gospel go together. This Sunday, we come to the third major section from Jesus' instruction to his disciples – the Sermon on the Plain. However, the second reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians offers a festive conclusion of Paul's instruction on the resurrection.

In the Gospel, Jesus is going deeper to the wellspring of action found in the human heart. He challenges us to get our hearts right. We need to recognize and remove the 'plank' that inhibits right vision and right judgment to set our hearts clear and straight. The quality of our hearts determines the quality of our actions and words. Last weekend, Jo and I, rejoiced as parents in witnessing the quality of actions and words of our daughter, Angela, and our son-in-law, Miguel. Together with Miguel's parents, aunties, and uncles, they transformed Jo's grief for losing a brother into the joy of being surrounded by people whose hearts are full of love – welcoming, comforting, and nurturing.

While the section on the Sermon on the Plain instructs us on the continuity that must prevail between the heart which is the ultimate source of human behavior, and the external action that flows from it, Paul's instruction, in the second reading, about the resurrection ends on a note of encouragement.

Jo and I, in the past two weeks, have been reminded on these instructions. When Jo's brother succumbed to the effects of Covid-19, Paul's words: *"Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55)* gave us reassurance. Similarly, in our response to the Diocesan Initial Plan for St. James and the other parishes of Deanery 1, may we be motivated by Paul when he said: *"Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:58)*

~ Peace,

Ben