

Homily: 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday: 2024: Cycle B: Wis 2: 12, 17-20; Ps 54; James 3: 16 – 4:3; Mk 9: 30-37

***“God’s Grace Transforming Our Nature in Regards to the Passions/Emotions”***

1. **All of us daily deal with the mystery of good and evil.** The choice is ultimately ours whether we embrace good or evil. And the battle is in the human heart – the seat of the passions or emotions, as Jesus has noted frequently. The ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** puts it so well, even after we are baptized and receive God’s sanctifying grace, *“It remains for the holy people of God to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ’s faithful mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.”* (par. 2549).
2. **In Christ human thoughts, passions and emotions can reach their fulfillment in charity and divine goodness - if we allow God to transform them over time.** In the 1<sup>st</sup> reading from the book of Wisdom we see the opposite reality, in a frightening way: *a philosophy of evil thoughts flowing out of an evil heart. Instead of repenting for sin the person with an evil heart attacks the one who is trying to be good, or today attacks the teaching of God and His Catholic Church which points us to the true good for mankind.* This attitude of justifying evil and attacking God and the Catholic philosophy of life is a frightening reality all humans can fall into if we are not careful, and Sacred Scripture is warning us of it: *either we repent when we do evil and sin, or eventually we may end up delighting in evil and hating God and the good that flows from Him.* It can happen: witness some of the sinister people in history like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and all the other perpetrators of genocides, e.g., in Rwanda in 1994, the various terrorist groups in the world, serial killers, abortionists, some of the evil priests and bishops in the history of the Church, etc. - all who have done great evil and harm to others. Those are worst case examples, but many people fall into this evil dynamic on a smaller scale. **The evil historical figures were not born that way, they became evil over time – if you ever watch or read about them.** It was through a series of free evil choices, small at first and bigger over time that led to

them viewing life in such an evil way with the help of Satan. They started to take delight in evil rather than good. We may say, *well I am not going to kill anyone, or encourage others to do great evil.* That hopefully is true, but every time we sin and rationalize it - rather than repenting, going to Confession, and with the help of God's grace trying to change for the better - we move in that evil direction.

3. St. James today gives us great insight into the reality of **our human passions – the sensitive part of the human person or our feelings which is what connects our mind and heart.** The principal passions are *love, hatred, desire, fear; joy, sadness, and anger* (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 1762 – 1775). They are neither good nor evil in themselves. It depends on what we choose to do with them. For example, if we have a feeling of impatience, or impurity, or anger that arises in our heart, once we become aware of these passions or emotions, it is an opportunity to grow in the virtue of patience or purity or kindness if we don't give in - or conversely to end up sinning in our heart and possibly in our actions. **The passions are the raw material of the moral life; our free-will is what determines whether our passions lead to good or evil.** The battle for holiness is to get our passions increasingly under the influence of God's grace in our mind (intellect) and will; rather than letting our passions take over our lives in a disordered way. To obtain this type of **Christian self-mastery** is a great grace and only happens over time. And St. James warns us today, if we don't engage in this battle for self-mastery in Christ over our disordered passions, we will not only not make any real progress in the spiritual life, but it eventually leads to great evil in our personal life and in society at large - (look at our own culture - e.g., widespread support for the grave evil of abortion, as a back-up for sexual immorality) – see all the *wars, envy, fighting, murder, jealousy, selfish ambition, and every foul practice.* Also, if we don't let Christ be the Lord of our passions/emotions we will end up committing the same sins repeatedly, and it will probably get worst over time because we will get frustrated and give up on some level. **The solution** is to daily surrender everything to the Lord, esp. our passions/emotions, and ask our Lady to help us! God bless you. †