

Homily

We continue to gaze into St. Faustina's 1938 Lenten retreat; today we look at four more ways to take up battle against spiritual evil.

Jesus said: *If someone causes you trouble, think what good you can do for the person who caused you to suffer.* Being a vessel of divine mercy is a weapon for good, for defeating evil. We need to work hard on this.

Often, our natural disposition seems to be to lash out when we are hurt. If someone hurts us we want to hurt them back. If someone causes an injury, we want them to suffer in return. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth seems a healing balm when we are injured. It is not. There is never satisfaction in seeing another suffer. Inflicting an injury upon another person is an offense to human dignity.

We can justify our thirst for revenge by calling it justice. Here we are relying on some sort of imaginary cosmic balance that required the aggressive to be humbled and the violent to be attacked. There is no such balance. The devil is about hatred, revenge, and un-forgiveness. We counter with a show of mercy. We forgive. We seek their good.

Jesus said: *Do not pour out your feelings.* A talkative soul will more easily be attacked by the devil. Pour out your feelings to the Lord only. Remember, the good and evil spirits hear what you say aloud. Feelings are fleeting. Truth is the compass. Interior recollection is a spiritual armor.

Remember, it is Jesus who is offering this instruction to Sr. Faustina. He is not advising her to ignore her feelings or to become unfeeling. Jesus wants to be the first to share her feelings. He will receive them with love. He will guide them with wisdom. He will purify them and use them, building up our body, not destroying it.

Think of the alternative. If I am offended by people, I want to proclaim my feelings about the person to my best friends. I want to share how evil and rotten they are with people who hold them in esteem. I want to crush them by my stories so that they live in fear of ever offending me again. If I were to act on my feelings, I would create a storm of gossip and judgement and of character assassination. How does this build up the Body of Christ? It doesn't. I may feel better for a moment, but, in reality, I have collaborated with evil and have lost the battle.

Jesus said: *Be silent when you are rebuked.* All of us have been disciplined at some time. We have no control over that, but we can control our response. The need to be right all the time can lead into demonic traps. God knows the truth. Let it go. Silence is a protection. The devil can use self-righteousness to trip us up.

Kids, if your parents discipline you, it is difficult to be silent and to receive it. You want to fight back and to justify your choices and actions. Jesus asked Sr. Faustina to receive correction with silence. This was not a silent disdain, like the glare you give your parents that says “I hate you” even though you say nothing. It is not ignoring what is said. Jesus wanted Sr. Faustina to receive the rebuke with humility. To accept it and to live by it.

Grown-ups are not any better at receiving correction. Our pride can be hurt, and we can feel compelled to defend our choices even when there is no good defense. Jesus offered a solution: Be silent. It is the silence that receives instruction and correction; submit ourselves to it and thank God for the moment of humility. That is tough!

Lastly for today, Jesus said: *Do not ask everyone’s opinion, but only the opinion of your confessor; be as frank and as simple as a child with him.*

Remember, Saint Faustina was a nun who lived in a convent. She was an adult, and she had taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. This is the context of our Lord’s instruction: *Do not ask everyone’s opinion...* In the convent obedience was a way of life.

In the convent, seeking opinions could rile the sisters and divide the community. It could challenge obedience and create disharmony. If she needed an opinion, Jesus instructed her to turn to one place—confession.

In our lives and to live our vocations, we need the support of others...many others! Sometimes this support comes by way of seeking advice. Still, we need to be careful in the pursuit of opinions. Opinions can divide a family or a community. They can be the occasion for pride or arrogance. People who offer opinions may not want the best for you.

When we feel a need for an opinion, what we need may in fact be a gift of the Holy Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety or fear of the Lord. Jesus directs Sr. Faustina to seek an opinion only in the context of a sacrament--confession. So can we.

Jesus said,

Don't ask everyone's opinion, but only the opinion of your confessor; be as frank and simple as a child with him.

He also said,

Be silent when you are rebuked.

Do not pour out your feelings.

If someone causes you trouble, think what good you can do for the person who causes you to suffer.