

## VIII TRINITY 2016

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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**ROMANS 6.19 ST. MATTHEW 7.15**



Actions speak louder than words! If we are looking for the standard God uses to evaluate us...we don't have to look any further than today's readings. Our actions must speak louder than our words!

Saint Paul is a man who never minces words. Last week we heard Paul argue because we have been given God's grace and are set free from sin, we are now truly free, to say and do what is right. These are more than just nice words...they mean we are in a new relationship with God...in which we are now free to call him "Father".

Jesus reveals God's love for us and tells us to call him *Abba*. *Abba* is the Aramaic word for *Father* but it has a much more personal meaning than the more formal *father*. Jesus tells us to call God..."Papa" or "Daddy". We have the same kind of intimate relationship with God he has...and like him...the freedom to do what is right and good.

Saint Paul tells us that through Jesus we have all become God's adopted children. As an adopted child myself, Paul's words have a special meaning for me. I know what it's like to have adoptive parents who loved me. Adopted children are supposed to enjoy the same relationship with their adoptive parents natural children enjoy with theirs. Parents who have adopted children understand this well.

We learn we are God's adopted children in church. Paul reminds us our lives must be transparent...before God...and before others. It does not matter where we come from...how educated we are...how much money we have or don't have...or how long we have been attending Saint Joseph Parish...we are all held to the same standard.

Our friend Paul has a lot to say about personal conduct in the Church and for the past few weeks he's been on a roll. He does this to get our attention...to get us to do more than talk about being God's children...we must act like God's children...regardless of who we are or what we think of ourselves. Our actions must speak louder than our words!

Today's Gospel is also about actions speaking louder than words and keeping our lives transparent before God and others. Jesus warns us to be on guard against false prophets...religious leaders who look and sound good on the outside...but hide the truth about what really motivates them...greed...power...outward appearance.

Jesus uses the metaphor of the tree as the test of whether religious leaders are doing God's work...or serving themselves. Good trees bear good fruit. Bad trees bear bad fruit...or none at all. You will know them for who they are by the product of their work. They may be able to hide their true selves from others for a while...but not from God. They will eventually be found out and exposed for the frauds they are.

None of us may ever use the Church to justify continued bad behavior or to make our selves feel morally superior to others. We may not use the Church to gain power or prestige or use our freedom to hurt others. We want to be known by the work we do...and like the good and healthy tree that produces good fruit...we want our hearts to produce good and healthy works.

That means our lives must be an open book...transparent before God and others. We should always conduct our lives as if we have no secrets to keep...and why would we want to keep secrets? It's all about transparency and openness in what we say and what we do.

Consider again the Collect for Purity at the beginning of the Mass:

- God...Daddy...knows what is in our hearts
- He knows what we want and need
- We can't keep secrets from him
- He helps us be open to himself and others
- We love him and he helps us love others

Jesus and Paul would both say talk is easy. Our actions must speak louder than our words!

