

8th Sunday of the year, Cycle C
Con foley

Lectionary 84:

Sir 27:4-7

Ps 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

1 Cor 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/030225.cfm>

Possible preaching themes

- How to test and improve our heart condition/inner disposition and spiritual sight.
- Spiritual Vision and how it affects action and behavior.
- Fruitfulness/fruitlessness as a sign of the condition of the heart.

Scientific resources:

- [Life's Essential 8: Updating and Enhancing the American Heart Association's Construct of Cardiovascular Health](#): The American Heart Association has devised an 8 metric tool that identifies key factors affecting cardiovascular health. The *Life's Essential Eight* comprises 4 areas affecting cardiovascular and metabolic health (blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body mass index); and 4 behavioural/lifestyle factors (smoking status, physical activity, sleep and diet). People who score well in these areas live longer and healthier lives. This tool provides a road map for developing strategies to counteract heart disease.
- [The Heart and the Eye: Seeing the Links](#): Research has demonstrated a clear link between eye diseases and cardiovascular disease. The heart and the eye have interlinking "root systems"; what's happening in the heart has implications for eyesight. For example, heart disease caused by high cholesterol can lead to inflammation in the retina resulting in the formation of new blood vessels, ultimately leading to vision loss. However, shared underlying physical mechanisms suggest the potential for shared solutions. Health care strategies for many eye conditions could benefit from treatments developed to counteract heart disease. Testing by ophthalmologists may be the first indication that a patient needs to see a cardiologist.
- **NASA Science - [Vision Changes in Space](#)**: This article explores reasons why the eyesight of astronauts is often impaired temporarily or permanently after an extended stay in space.

Homily outline weaving all resources:

- **Heart in the bible:**
 - In the bible the heart represents our inner core, the deepest part of our being. It is the engine room and the hidden source of our words and actions. A loving heart is a healthy heart, and [is what pleases God](#).

- In [today's Gospel](#) Jesus teaches that the condition of our hearts will affect what we *do* and what we *say*. "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good...for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks."
- The [beatitudes proclaim](#), "Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God."
- The [disciples on the road to Emmaus](#) reported, "Were not our hearts burning while [Jesus] spoke to us."
- **Heart language in conversation.**
 - We often speak of people being cold-hearted, half-hearted, broken-hearted, warm-hearted, and wholehearted. We observe "her heart is in the right place" or "my heart wasn't in it."
 - When we speak of the heart, we mean more than the physical organ but something spiritual. Our heart condition affects not only our own wellbeing but the welfare of others too.
- **Monitoring the Heart.**
 - Medical experts advise us to monitor our heart condition as it has implications for many areas of physical and mental health. Cardiograms, blood tests and computerized tomography (CT) scans can tell us how we score in relation to *Life's Essential Eight*.
- **How to test our *Spiritual Heart Condition*?**
 - Scriptures and tradition give us many useful tests for this. These are not technological-biological checks but spiritual and practical tests. We could call them *Spiritual Life's Essentials Aids* since they are both tests and remedies for developing healthy spiritual hearts.
- ***Spiritual Life's Essential Aids* include:**
 - **Silence** allows us to listen to God, build up inner peace and gentleness. St. Francis De Sales had a ferocious temper in early life but later became known as "the gentle saint." "Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength" ([St. Francis De Sales](#)).
 - **Prayer:** The psalmist prays "A pure heart create for me oh God." Prayer opens us to receive God's grace and allows the divine physician to work in us in ways "[infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.](#)"
 - **Reading Scripture:** Scripture is a believer's manual to a healthy heart and helps us to identify the fruits that reveal our heart condition: "[the fruit of the](#)

[Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.](#)”

- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** The Church teaches that the Sacrament of Penance is a heart event; what is most important at the core of this sacrament is “[conversion of heart](#),” revealed as a detachment from sin and a progressive journey into friendship with Christ.
- **Spiritual Reading:** just as the physical vision of an astronaut is often impaired after an extended stay in space, our spiritual sight can be damaged by spending time in negative company or ingesting dark material. A healthy diet of good spiritual reading can purify the heart.
- **Community:** St. John Henry Newman believed that after grace the greatest influence over the human soul is the love of another person. The motto for his coat of arms was “Cor ad Cor loquitor” (“heart speaks to heart”). Healthy communities transform the hearts of its members through strengthening the internal ties of the baptized as well as through shared outreach such as feeding the poor, and working for justice especially for the marginalized and those whose voices are too easily oppressed.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Today’s good news is that our spiritual heart condition can be improved at any stage of life. If we engage with the ***Spiritual Life’s Essential Aids*** a hard heart can be softened and a cold heart can be warmed. In the process, we extend this spiritual cardiac care to others, enriching and expanding their hearts as well
 - There are many well tested spiritual health care strategies for the heart that can clarify our vision as well. This will allow us to embrace fully Paul’s admonition to us in today’s second reading: to be firm, steadfast, and always fully devoted to the work of the Lord.
 - In this good work we journey deep into the heart of God, and as members of Christ’s body increasingly take on his Sacred Heart.

Tags: cardiology, heart, ophthalmology, vision