

## **SEPTEMBER 1 2024 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL**

It's a very challenging reading today - especially in the context of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, as instituted in 2015 by Pope Francis. And it's about how we live our Christian faith.

How we live our Christian faith. And how we consume—we just consume without any thought. Are we just polluting without any thought to get more and more? Or are we really living a life? Are we going to leave something, a heritage for those who come after us? Or is it all about ourselves?

And actually, when we go to the second reading of James, he says, "Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves." It is so easy to go through life without any thought and just get my own little thing. But we need to be present and live conscientiously.

It's so important to live conscientiously, to think of our neighbor. And our neighbor, of course, is also creation. If we keep consuming the way we do, then we know what's going to happen. It's not going to get any better for our grandchildren.

So, today's reading is very much about how we live. Jesus really points that out in the Gospel reading. What comes out of us defiles us, not what goes in, but what comes out of us. So, it is about what's in the heart.

What's in our heart? If you want to know who someone is, listen to what comes out of their mouth and observe their actions. Do the actions and the words match? Then we know who the person is. If they don't match, then there's a problem.

It is so easy to say, "I'm a good Christian; I go to Mass every Sunday, and I say my prayers." But if it all turns into "me"—into what my wants are and my need to control everything—then there's a problem.

So, it calls us today to reflect. It's all too easy to look at others and say, "Hey, those people are not doing the right thing." Or, "That country," for instance Brazil, "if they stop cutting so much wood and clearing the Amazon, then it would be okay." But it starts with us; it starts with me.

Where do I fit into this? Am I being genuine? Am I really trying to live a genuine life? Is it all about me being a consumer, just consuming and buying all these things I don't need?

As I reflect on all this, it is incredible how a symptom of that consumerism has manifested in the last number of years. We see all kinds of self-storage units coming up everywhere—major self-storage units where people can put their excess belongings and pay a monthly fee. It's big business, and lots of money is being made.

So we can move our excess stuff into these storage units. This brings us back to ourselves again. How much am I consuming? How much do I need?

Next time I'm in a mall or I'm online with Amazon or whomever, I must ask myself: Do I really need this? Do I need new clothes? Do I really need them? Are my old clothes still in good shape or are they worn out? Of course, if they're worn out, we need to have new clothes.

However, if it is just for the sake of having something new or getting the next generation of a computer while my old computer is still working reasonably well, then I am truly moving into consumerism—a state of self-gratification that can be very detrimental. This is also spiritually detrimental because we are not there for others anymore.

Thus, the readings today are very challenging, and it's something to pray over. Maybe consider Psalm 15, which speaks about the virtues of living a good life. Amen.