

OCTOBER 14 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

I'm afraid to invite Jesus myself at dinner. Can you imagine Jesus was with you? You've got a guest in the house for dinner, and they reprimand you for being fake—that you are not genuine. Not exactly a compliment. But this is our gospel reading today, and it's very challenging.

The thing is, of course, Jesus talks about being externally religious and forgetting about the internal. It's so easy to live in the external, to do all the right things, and have people say, "Oh, you're pretty holy. Look at what you're doing." But what matters is what's happening within, of course. God sees what is within.

In today's readings from Romans, Paul is talking about the same thing. It's so easy to go external and to live faith externally, forgetting the internal. It is so important to be genuine. For us to be genuine, the external and the internal have to meet one another. They have to complement each other and become one. We cannot be one or the other.

Sometimes it reminds me of marriages where everything looks good externally. To outsiders, the couple seems happy and loving, but when they're together, it's not as happy as it appears. That's living a false life. The same is true in our faith—to be genuine and real. To be genuine means we have to listen to ourselves, to what is happening within us.

In our psalm today, Psalm 19, I love the words: "The heavens proclaim the glory of God." The heavens proclaim the glory of God. God teaches us, but it's unspoken. God teaches us in the heart. We have to be open to the heart, to listen, to examine

ourselves daily. Am I being genuine? Am I living a clean life? Am I honest with the people around me? Or am I making excuses, trying to make it look like I'm so good? We have to be careful with that.

So often in confessions, people come to me and the first thing they confess is that they've been telling stories or lies, not being genuine—yet still going to church every day. I'm not saying don't go to church—please, go to church—but take that time to look inwards, every day, to take stock of what is happening so we know who we are in God.

In the AA Twelve-Step movement, there's talk about taking personal inventory daily—looking within ourselves and, from there, knowing who we are and living genuine lives. When we're genuine, we know who we are, and we know how God is speaking to our hearts.

Today we celebrate the memorial of Pope St. Callistus. He was Pope from 217 to 222—very early in the Church—and was martyred. That's why I'm in red. He also had to discover who he was. He was a slave during the Roman Empire. There were many kinds of slaves then—some working in salt mines, doing very hard labor—but Callistus was actually a manager of a bank. The bank went bankrupt, and there's a whole account of how he was punished, even put to work in a mill. When debtors tried to recover their money, things went wrong again, and eventually he ended up in a salt mine.

The mistress of Emperor Commodus, who was a Christian, was able to use her influence to free Christians from the salt mines. She freed Callistus, and he ended up working for Pope Zephyrinus, who was Pope at that time. He must have been a very good manager, because when Zephyrinus died, Callistus was chosen as Pope—an ex-slave. This did not sit well with everyone.

The only thing we know about Pope Callistus is through his greatest critic, Hippolytus. Hippolytus was everything Callistus was not—cultured, well-educated, and wealthy. He did not like that Callistus was chosen Pope and even proclaimed himself Pope, becoming the first antipope, only 200 years after Christ.

But Callistus was actually a very good Pope. One of the things he is most known for—and we can thank him for today—is that he decreed those living in mortal sin could be readmitted to the Church. At that time, many people, under persecution, denied their faith to save their lives. When they wanted to return, they could not be readmitted. Callistus changed that. He allowed them to do proper penance and return to the Church. Many of us have committed mortal sins—I'm not exempt, by the way—and we can thank him for this mercy. After proper penance, we can be readmitted. He was very foundational in our Church.

Eventually, he died a martyr. The account is not clear—it's more hearsay—but he was said to have been thrown into a well during a great commotion in Rome. He was one of the early martyrs of the Church.

It's good to pray with that. How am I living my life? I invite you, if you have some time today, to spend ten minutes just gently taking stock of your own life, and see how you're doing in God. Amen.