

PASTORAL SECTION

HOMILETICS

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Sept. 6)

Mark 7, 31-37

An End To "Palabas"

We all know the meaning of *palabas* (display; put-on) or *pasikat* (ostentation). This is a very common trait among us. Perhaps without realizing it we often make some kind of *palabas* — at least in a mild form.

Palabas is not always bad. For example, when we go to Church on Sundays, it is good to put on our best dress or shirt. This can be done for a vain intention, of course, but it can also be done to emphasize that Sunday is a special day and that we feel honored in keeping out "date" with our brothers and sisters in offering the sacrifice of the Mass.

But there are some kinds of *palabas* that we must avoid. We know that the rich and those who pretend to be rich and also the politicians often overdo their *palabas*. But I shall not talk about this. I want to call your attention to a bad kind of *palabas* which is common to rich and poor alike, to public personalities and private individuals. It is the *palabas* by which we give our word in public without making a deep personal commitment. Suppose you are meeting with your group and your leader asks for volunteers to visit sick children in the hospital or to clean the town plaza. At the meeting, seventy per cent or more say that they volunteer. But when the actual work starts, it is good if there are twenty-five per cent present. What happened to the fifty per cent? They raised their hands or gave their names out of the urge for *palabas*. They did not make a deep personal commitment, but only a show for public notice. Are we not often guilty of this bad kind of *palabas*? If so, let us take care to correct ourselves.

Let me give another illustration. A man begins to have success after success. The number of his friends and admirers grow. They praise him for almost anything he does. Then one day he commits a disastrous mistake . . . he falls into disgrace . . . and his friends and admirers disappear. Were they his real friends? Did they really value his talents? No. Their regard for him was merely *palabas*.

When Our Lord Jesus Christ walked on earth, he experienced a lot of *palabas* from other people. In the beginning of his ministry many people volunteered to be his disciples and in fact, some of them shared his way of life. When he performed miracles in public, the people cheered for him and wanted him to be their king. But Jesus Christ knew that this was all *palabas* on the part of the people. As the Evangelist John writes, Jesus knew the people and "did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him" (John 2, 24-25).

In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus did some *palabas* — for, as we said, not all *palabas* is bad. Jesus performed miracles in the presence of the crowds in order to call their attention to his messianic mission. But towards the end of his ministry, he preferred to make his miracles in private, as in the story of our gospel reading for today. At this time, he no longer wanted *palabas* nor did he accept the *palabas* of superficial loyalty from the people. He had come to the crucial part of his ministry. He was about to prove that he came not only to make miracles and teach doctrine but to give himself — nothing less than himself in an utter holocaust of love — for the salvation of men. And so he also started to emphasize that what he wanted from people was not popular applause or merely external show of loyalty, but the gift of one's self, the wholehearted commitment of one's life to his service — in a word, true faith and love.

My dear friends, we know that people are very fond of *palabas*. But at a certain point, we must put an end to *palabas*. The gospel reading today teaches us that what we really need is — pardon the expression — *paloob*. We must go with Jesus in private and ask him to close our minds and hearts to empty *palabas* and open them to the *paloob* of sincere faith and great love.