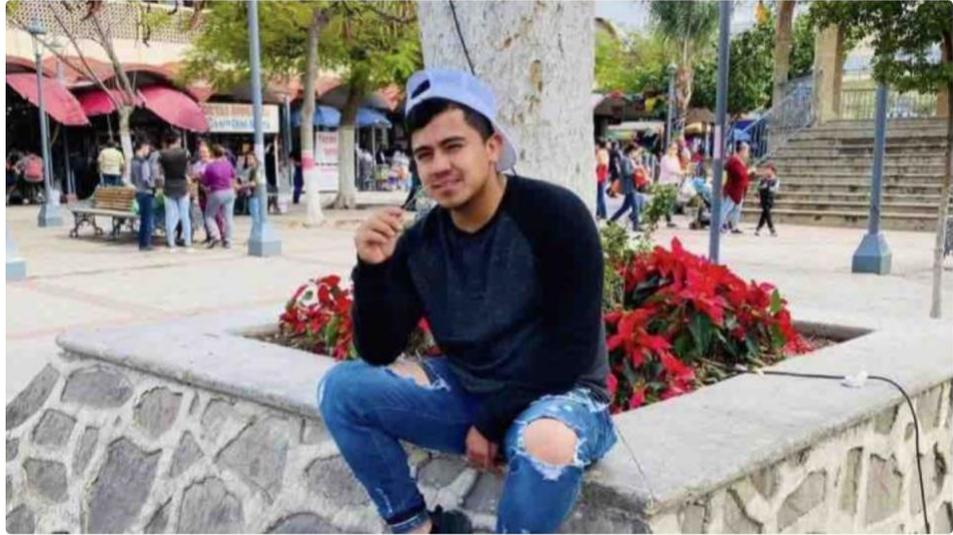


## ***Sin from Within***

Homily for the Twenty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B  
and Memorial Mass for José Rivera de la Cruz,  
Mexican Agricultural Temporary Worker in Wapato, Washington  
*Deuteronomy 4,1-2. 6-8; James 1, 17-18. 21b-22. 27; Mark 7,1-8. 14-15. 21-23*

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Peace be with you.  
Thank you for  
praying with each  
other at the loss of  
José Rivera de la  
Cruz. My  
condolences. My  
condolences to all of  
you. I cannot  
imagine how hard it  
must be for José's  
family and friends  
back in Mexico.  
They sent their  
young son north to  
work in the harvest. He came to earn money that he could send back home.



José had gone shopping to the mall last Sunday evening. He was purchasing a few items in the mall. Unbeknownst to him, a gun fight broke out between a couple of young men in the parking lot. The gun fight was gang related. José happened to be coming out of the mall. Along with everyone else, he was taken by surprise. He was caught in the crossfire. He was struck with a bullet. He died at the shopping mall. The police have been so clear. José had nothing to do with the gangs. He had nothing to do with the shooting. He was simply shopping for himself and his family. He was accidentally shot to death. I cannot imagine the pain of his mother, his father, his family and his friends. We are all so sorry this happened.

Where does this violence come from? Why are there gangs fighting each other? Why do bad things happen to good people like José? Why do innocent families suffer such loss? We read about the disappeared in Mexico. We learn about the drug wars in Latin America. We read about gang violence and shootings here in the United States. Why?

There is no sufficient answer. But this Sunday's Gospel does give us some insight. In the closing lines of tonight's Gospel from St. Mark, Jesus tells his followers "... evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.

There are very few sayings of Jesus that are quite a graphic in naming the types of sin we commit. The list Jesus notes is the list we see in the telenovelas. There is something perennial about our human failures.

And if we are really honest with ourselves, we know that we have been tempted. Who among us has not been tempted sexually? Who among us has not been so angry with another person we wanted to destroy him? Who among us has not grown jealous of another's success when we work just as hard without success? Who among us had not been defrauded by having to pay bribes to officials? Who among us has not had family that has had to pay a coyote in order to pass up to the north to earn money for our families? Who among us is not saddened by the addiction here in the United States that drives the growth and production of opioids in Latin America? Who among us has not read something about the violent drug trade?

We are all aware of those external realities. But Jesus challenges us. He tells us not to blame what goes on around us. Look inside. What happens in the outside begins inside. It begins in our minds. It begins in our emotions. It begins in our hearts.

Look at that list Jesus gives us again: "... evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."

We can certainly see these activities not only on the telenovelas we watch, but in the television news and in the newspaper headlines. They are out there. But they begin in here. Inside of us.

Jesus invites us to examine what is going on inside of our minds and our hearts. What we think, what we imagine, what we desire, our lusts, our drives, our disordered ambitions get projected outward. They become "... evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly."

The untimely and unjust death of José Rivera de la Cruz reminds us that our outward signs and our inward thoughts can have consequences in real life that are unexpected. I am sure the two suspects the police have publicized did not intend for José de Rivera de la Cruz to die. But they are responsible. They are responsible in a way they could not have imagined.

Why did José Rivera de la Cruz have to die? That is like asking why did Jesus have to die on a cross? There is no good reason. There is no good reason why innocent men die. But we can learn from their deaths.

Jesus dies on a cross. Innocent and without sin. At of his dying and rising grows the mission and its Church. Thus, life comes out of death. Good comes forth from evil. Saints come forth from sinners.

Peace be with you!