

## **"When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear" (Sir 27:4-7).**

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

the scripture from the book of Jesus Sirach sounds strange, it even sounds quite scary: "When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear."

This is a short sentence, but the author was aware of what he was writing down. The Book of Jesus Sirach is quite a special book in the Old Testament because it left many perplexed. So, it took some time before it was included in history as a book of the Holy Scripture. Even Martin Luther had reservations and his doubts about this book.

But it is now a part of the Holy Scripture, and it is the reading text of our today's Mass. The author of the book from around 170 a.C wants to connect the Jewish tradition with the Hellenistic tradition. It is said that the book is a "book for education". Sirach wants to educate and qualify people. He is concerned with reshaping people and society: Solidarity and trust are important prerequisites for the new society. And it is the task of the wise, as Sirach says, to educate people for this.

Sirach is indeed a book of wisdom. There are a number of sentences and statements that are briefly formulated, but very dense in content. This is not different from our sentence:

"When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear."

The quote has a continuation that opens the meaning of the text:

"So do one's faults when one speaks."

So, this image from agrarianism is about the human being. The picture is a description of the human character before Sigmund Freud or C.G. Jung. But it shows that a person, if you deal with him, has very different facets. It is difficult to see through a person with one look or to be able to classify him after a few minutes.

This is the plan of Jesus Sirach, before psychoanalysis existed, to describe man and his nature: There is the light side and the dark side, there is the good side and the bad side. If I want to understand a person, I have to understand what of him is only a facade and what is authentic.

And so, he comes up with the sieve as a metaphor: I shake the sieve and the waste remains. But the waste not important at all. People with their facade they put up to other people – It's the show they play.

The sieve symbolizes the outside and the inside of a person: The outside is the facade, but the inside is the person himself, who sometimes likes to hide himself.

But what falls through the sieve is the good in person. That is the person in his tenderness and purity. That is the person with his or her emotions, his or her fears, but also with his or her wishes and desires.

It is important to recognize what is true and authentic in people and not to be put off by the husks and the garbage that gets stuck in the sieve and appears. If I get to know this side of the other person, then it will be easier for me to deal with him. Even if there is the dark side of the other person, even if it is not understandable why the other person is so aggressive and causes so many problems, I can begin to understand him if I know his good side.

This is not a gray theory, but this is what we experience again and again in daily life: You meet someone you don't like. He seems unfriendly and dismissive. In this case, I have two options: One option is to quickly say goodbye to the unfriendly person because I don't want to have anything to do with him. The other option is to get involved with the unfriendly person and, with a lot of patience, see what lies behind this unfriendliness. Often the effort is rewarded: Dislike turns into sympathy, perhaps even close friendship - and perhaps much more.

Jesus Sirach wants to use the sieve to separate the garbage, the waste from man or woman. However, the purpose is not to see the negative side of man or woman, but to uncover the positive side of them, which seems to be very hidden.

Let us approach people in all openness and friendliness. We do not know what is good and what is bad about him until we have taken the sieve to separate good from bad.

That's the message of Sirach for us!

Amen!