

**HOMILY**  
**September 3, 2006**

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Twice a year, The New York Times publishes a Sunday supplement of fashions. The supplement appears in the spring and in the fall. Page after page of full-color ads appear in which the major designers present their latest offerings. The pages fairly scream, “This is what you *must* wear if you want to be *IN*.”

Needless to say, most of us would not be caught dead wearing the clothing or the accessories depicted in The New York Times. But how many of us do spend most of our waking hours trying to impress others with the way we look?

I think that if Jesus came back today to preach again the Gospel text we just heard, he would begin by holding up the latest edition of The New York Times fashion supplement and proclaim: “Sisters and brothers, you have made a religion out of looking good. According to you, what you wear is who you are! Not true! Your clothes are not you. The real you is in your heart. And if that heart is rotten, no amount of fashionable outerwear will make you better.”

The heart. In many ways, it is what is most human about us. We depend on the exertion of our physical heart to keep us alive, pumping blood throughout our bodies. But the heart has come to mean more than just a physical organ. We ultimately stand on that little island we call “Heart.” It is a place we create. It is a place where we are responsible for its upkeep.

For some human beings, their hearts are environmental disaster areas. The beach is littered. The landscape is blasted. They live in a place of ugliness, not beauty. What about us? What is the shape of our hearts? Not our physical heart, but what’s inside us—the core of our being?

Are there some blights that make them less than the paradises they should be? The heart is where we store all those ugly things we would rather not be seen displaying in public. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts,

unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. For some reason, we hold onto them. We don't want to give them up, so we clutter up our "Heart Island" home, holding on to what Jesus calls wicked designs. We figure we can always throw trash overboard if we have to. It is just taking up space, nothing else. We can always get rid of it. It is not doing any harm, just sitting there. But if it is in your heart, it is in you. It is you.

In our places of residence, we do major housecleaning several times a year. But with our hearts, every day is heart-cleaning time. We cannot afford to let the ugly things we have stored in our heart remain there. They will fester and spread because they are not inert or inactive. Any one of us could come down with a case of poisoning that could prove fatal.

What makes us who we are is not what we wear but where we live. And where we live most intimately is out of our hearts. The question Jesus poses to us in today's Gospel concerns the nature of that inner resource.

Is your heart a home or a horror?