The Summit Online Exploring the Word

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus told a parable to his disciples: 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart.'

(Luke 6:39-45)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

Jesus often used parables as a teaching tool. These are generally brief stories that have a double meaning, and we should read them for their metaphorical interpretation rather than their literal meaning.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Luke continues with his examination of the new order ushered in by discipleship and delves into the personal dimension of what it means to be a follower of Christ. The 'fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher'. Jesus offers himself as a model of non-judgment. Judgement, after all, belongs only to God. Echoes of last week's text can be heard in this week's gospel: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged yourselves; grant pardon and you will be pardoned.' Disciples must recognise their own shortcomings and work tirelessly to rectify them so that what issues forth from their hearts are the good fruits that only true goodness of heart can produce.

- How easy or difficult do you find it to be self-reflective or self-critical?
- How can you encourage each other to recognise and nurture the goodness inside us all?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you find judging the shortcomings of others easier than facing your own shortcomings?
- · What fills your heart?
- This week, spend some time each day quietly undertaking an 'examination of conscience' to discern what truly fills your heart and what fruit you can produce.
- Try not to judge others for what you may see as their shortcomings.
- Have you ever been the victim of someone's unfair judgment or criticism? How did this make you feel? Have you ever been too quick to judge someone else, or forced to confront your own failings? What steps did you take to change? Share your reflections with each other.
- You could use today's communion antiphon as your prayer this week:

I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful to me, sing psalms to the name of the Lord Most High.



SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

From its earliest days, the Church has provided an avenue through which to help the faithful recognise and address human frailty and weakness. The sacrament of reconciliation provides us an opportunity to confess our failings before God, seek his forgiveness for them and become reconciled again in his love. The Church describes 'interior penance' as 'conversion of the heart, interior conversion' (CCC, §1430). This notion of heart conversion is central to Jesus' message in the gospel text:

Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil ... At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace.'

(CCC, §1431)

- Since next week is the beginning of Lent and catechumens will enter their final stage of preparation before baptism or reception into the Church, this could be a good time to focus on how prepared the catechumens are for this final stage.
- You could provide a framework for internally examining conscience to help catechumens determine how far the journey has taken them and whether some distance still needs to be travelled.
- One-on-one private conversations with the parish priest could be arranged to help guide this discernment and clarify any lingering questions.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

This text again immediately follows last week's gospel and continues the theme we have begun to explore. The Gospel's demands are both surprising and challenging. In this week's text, the emphasis shifts to the necessity and importance of scrutinising our own conduct. True disciples are in no position to judge others, but they must honestly confront what lies in the depths of their own hearts.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- During Lent, does your community offer opportunities for the sacrament of reconciliation? Are there ways for catechumens to witness the public prayer aspects of this sacrament, so they can experience what may be available to them after their baptism or reception?
- Use the open Scriptures and a candle as a focus, and set aside some time for quiet reflection. Pray for each other as you are about to enter the final stage of your journeys. A suitable song could be A New Heart for a New World (GA 438). Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in the RCIA at \$94E.

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