

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019 (Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Ecclesiasticus 27:5-8; Psalm 91(92):2-3,13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; Luke 6: 39-45.

### **Every tree can be told by its own fruit!**

This week the discourse of the beatitudes moves on to a number of loosely connected wisdom sayings. The link between the different sayings is not very clear. Following on from the list of blessings and an invitation to approach relationships from a vulnerable place, these sayings seem to encourage us to be careful in our relationships with our sisters and brothers.

Last week's gospel asked us not to sit in judgement on our sisters and brothers and not to condemn them, because if we do, God himself will sit in judgement against us and condemn us! (This does not refer to the civil and criminal courts of justice, where some of us are delegated as judge and jury for the safeguard of society.) If I sit in judgement against my sisters and brothers and condemn them, I will be like the blind person leading another blind person. Before I can presume to sit in judgement, I need to be sure that my actions are faultless; but who among us can truly declare oneself to be without fault? Even if we are not ready to confess it, but we know that we often fail and need to be guided.

If I who am blind try to guide another blind person, then we can rest assured that we will both fall on top of each other in the pit which neither of us can see! Rather than trying to judge and condemn my sister or brother for their sins, it is better for me to acknowledge my own sinfulness and show compassion to those around me.

Similarly, what right do I have to point out the splinter in my brother's eye when I do not realise that I have a whole plank in my eye, stopping me from seeing my brother's splinter! Unless and until I humbly accept my own mistakes and failings, then I cannot offer to help my sister and brother. If we both admit that we have our own mistakes and in our vulnerability we accept each other, then we can build friendship and intimacy, and intimacy produces new life!

Rather than taking the higher moral ground, it would be better for me to be a humble and faithful disciple, following and listening to God's word. Then I may be able to offer the good news that I have received to those around me. This too requires humility and vulnerability, as I can only be open to new learning when I accept that I do not have all knowledge, and in the sharing of my knowledge I need to humbly acknowledge that I am only repeating the words of the master. A disciple will never be superior to his teacher but can only be as good as his teacher.

Our words and actions with those around us are our fruits and give witness to who we truly are in the depth of our heart. Just like a tree only produces fruit according to its kind, so also we can only produce fruit according to what is in our heart. When I am humble and vulnerable, I can gently reach out and offer a helping hand to those around me, not out of a feeling of superiority, but out of sincere concern and compassion towards my sisters and brothers. Last week Jesus invited us to be compassionate because the Father is compassionate; if I am constantly aware of nurturing within me the image and likeness of the Father, then my words and actions will reflect the love of God I believe in.

A good tree can only produce good fruit, just as a rotten tree can only produce rotten fruit. I cannot hide who I really am, because my fruit is my testimony.

Mario