

27. February 2022

## The measure of God

Lk 6:39-45

*Jesus told them a parable, 'Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will be like teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out that splinter in your eye," when you cannot see the great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter in your brother's eyes. 'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. Every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts; bad people draw what is bad from the store of badness. For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart.*

The Lord offers us today a most valuable discourse. On this occasion, we will focus on his words about not judging.

Jesus teaches us to be very careful about the faults of others. The Lord knows us human beings very well, and he knows that we are tempted not to notice our own mistakes, to hide them, to relativise them and to avoid them as best we can. On the other hand, we have a great facility for noticing the faults of others, being attentive to the slightest mistake they make... It may even happen that what annoys us most about others is precisely a reflection of our own hidden errors, of which we are not aware. That is why we can say that self-knowledge protects us from the folly of feeling superior to others.

When Jesus speaks of 'not judging' (Mt 7:1), he certainly means that we are not to pass judgement or condemnation on a person. This is a huge lack of charity, coming from an unreconciled heart; a heart that probably has not yet truly experienced and internalised God's forgiveness and love. If someone had lived this experience and had self-knowledge, that person would not be able to judge the other without love, for he would know how God has had mercy on him and that would be his measure of how he treats others.

This, then, is the key in the encounter with the other person; this must be our measure. If we accept it in our lives, we will begin to measure with God's measure and to treat everyone as He does.

A clarification is in order here. "Not to judge" does not mean that we should not discern a particular act, assessing whether or not it corresponds to God's measure. We should not interpret this word of the Lord as meaning that we should accept and applaud everything that other people do. Then we must clearly distinguish between the concrete act and the person who commits it.

Let me give a simple example: someone steals. It is a bad act and we have to consider it as such. The correct judgement would then be to say that it is an intrinsically evil action. However, we do not know the circumstances in which the person committed the theft: perhaps he was not only motivated by greed but was in need; perhaps he was even forced to steal... That is why we should not condemn him forever as a thief through our judgement. Perhaps he has even recognised his mistake and repented, and we do not know it.

The example that Jesus gives us in today's Gospel must also be interpreted correctly. Jesus does not tell us that we should always overlook the faults of others; he shows us the right way to deal with them. In fact, it would be a fault against love and against truth if we let our brother continue in his error, having the possibility to point it out to him. Let us remember that we are called to be "our brother's keeper" (cf. Gen 4:9)!

I would like to give a real example to make myself better understood. A sister in our community counselled a woman who was wondering whether or not to have an abortion. After a long discussion, she finally decided to have the baby. Some time later, this woman said that the decisive thing was a sentence our sister said to her: that her decision had to be based on the truth, the truth that she knew well from her Christian roots, i.e. to let the child live. And she had to make this decision even against her boyfriend's will. Thus, she was able to say YES to her son's life. Finally her boyfriend also accepted it and now they are both happy to have the child.

The essence of what the Lord tells us in today's Gospel is to act under the primacy of love. Encountering other people from the outside and those closest to us must be permeated by the same spirit in which God comes to meet us. We can constantly ask Him for this and allow Him to purify our own hearts. In this way, we will be able to find the right attitude towards others.

NOTE: To deepen the theme of self-knowledge, it would be good to listen to this lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYGsM602NXA>