

26. June 2023

God's measure

Mt 7:1-5

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard used for you. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? And how dare you say to your brother, "Let me take that splinter out of your eye," when, look, there is a great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.

Jesus teaches us to be very careful about the faults of others. The Lord knows us humans very well, and He knows our temptation to be unaware of our own mistakes, to conceal them, to relativise them and to evade them as best we can. On the other hand, it is very easy for us to notice the faults of others and to be always on the lookout for the slightest mistake they make... It may even happen that what annoys us most about the other person are precisely those faults that are most similar or even identical to our own, even though we are not aware of them. That is why it can be said that self-knowledge protects us from the foolishness of feeling superior to others.

In speaking of 'not judging', Jesus 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 has probably not yet truly experienced and internalised God's love and forgiveness. If a person has experienced it deeply and knows himself, he would not be able to judge the other person in this way, because he knows 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 persons; this is the measure by which we are to measure them. If we abide by this standard in our lives, we will begin to measure with God's measure and treat each other as He does.

Now, a clarification is in order here. Not judging does not mean that we should not discern a particular act, assessing whether or not it corresponds to God's measure. We cannot interpret this word of the Lord as meaning that we should accept and

applaud everything that other people do. The essential thing is to be able to distinguish between the concrete act and the person who commits it.

Let me give a simple example: someone steals. It is an intrinsically evil act and we cannot close our eyes to it. The objective judgement is therefore to say that it is a bad act in itself. However, we do not know the circumstances in which the person in question committed the theft: perhaps he was not only motivated by greed but was in need; perhaps he was even forced to steal... Therefore, we should not condemn him forever as a thief through our judgement. Maybe he has even already recognised his mistake and repented, and we do not know it.

Also the example Jesus gives us in today's gospel must be interpreted correctly. The Lord does not tell us to close our eyes to the faults of others, but shows us the right way to deal with them. In fact, it would be a failure against love and against the truth if we let our neighbours continue in their mistake, having the possibility to bring it to their attention. Let us remember that we are called to be "our brother's keeper" (cf. Gen 4:9).

I would like to give a real-life example to give a better understanding. The obstetrician in our community had a counselling session with a woman who was thinking of having an abortion. After a long discussion, the woman decided to have the baby. Some time later, the woman said that what was decisive was the sentence that her decision had to be based on the truth, the truth that she knew well from her Christian roots, that is, to let the child live. And this decision she had to make despite her boyfriend's resistance. Thus, she was able to say a total YES to her son's life. Finally her boyfriend also accepted it and they were both happy to have the child.

The essence of what the Lord tells us in today's Gospel is the primacy of love. As we encounter other people, whether they be outsiders or those closest to us, we are to do so in the same spirit in which God comes to meet us. We can ask God to fill us with His Spirit and allow Him to purify our hearts. In this way, we can come to have the right attitude towards others.