

Homily. 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 2/3 March 2019.

Heaven knows, it's the easiest thing in the world to be a critic. It's a breeze to find fault in others, shooting our mouths off about it, letting all and sundry know what we think is wrong. Anyone can be like this and many are because it takes so little effort, even bolstering ones sense of superiority into the bargain. When we're like this we are plank people, quickly, sometimes even gleefully, pointing out the splinter in others eyes, all the while not realising the great plank in our own character. Acting like this, common as it is, makes us feel better about ourselves for a short time, but it's no real answer to anything. It makes no lasting difference, nor does it bring about real improvement to anyone or of anything.

In the gospel Jesus says that we are His disciples, that we're students of His way and method. He wants us to come to Him learning from Him so that when we speak about the wrongs and problems we notice it'll be in a helpful way bringing about lasting change for the better. His method is one that lets us to know ourselves first, splinters, planks, the lot, because we'll get to experience how deeply and unconditionally we're always loved by God. It's this grounding in God's love for us that lets us face all of our weaknesses without fear or despair. Having done this we can then see with clear eyes, with the eyes of Jesus, the splinters in others, helping them clear their vision so that they can see with the light of God.

Before we say anything then, especially when it comes to pointing out splinters in others, we always start with ourselves and God's love for us. Jesus gives Himself to us always and everywhere so that we can do this.

He's giving Himself to you and me right this minute, bringing us together, loving, teaching, caring and nourishing us all. He's busily removing our planks and blind spots so that we can see properly learning how to become a healer, a guiding hand and light for others.

This is hard work for us, I know, something we'll always be practicing and improving, but it's where we have to begin. It's doing the work of our partnership with Jesus our Teacher, as His disciples and students. In no way is it as easy as being a critic, a fault-finder and complainer, but it is much more positive and constructive. Some will find this all too hard for them. They'll see the splinters, judge others, criticise and gossip about them and then they walk away feeling smug in themselves for being better than those they leave behind. They're blind and they'll stay blind, and the result of their words, apart from depressing and disempowering people, is that nothing ever gets better, that everything stays the same.

As I said to you earlier, we can be like this. It's the easiest thing in the world to be, but it never helps much and is even harmful. It's not what Jesus is teaching us. Instead, Jesus wants us to grow strong, making us fearless in His love when knowing ourselves, and wiser and stronger in healing the blindness we see around us. In the words of St. Paul, we're thankful to God for giving us this gift, this victory. What's more, we'll never have to admit defeat. We'll just keep on learning and working at the Lord's work, knowing that we're never labouring in vain for nothing that brings light is ever lost in the sight and radiance of God.