

Homily. 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 19/20 February 2022.

Let's start by clarifying something; This is not the gospel for doormats. I repeat; This section of Luke's gospel isn't written so as to turn us into doormats. The words we've listened to don't tell us to please everyone all of the time, regardless of the circumstances or the impact on us. In fact, Jesus never ever said that we were to be doormats, perpetual pleasers of others always at their beck and call. If you don't believe me then look no further than the Cross. People weren't crucified then, nor are they today, for trying to please others. They were crucified, as they still are, for challenging the authorities and the powers that be, the privileged and those who live high and happy off the work and wealth of others; the poor, the sick, vulnerable and disempowered, the humble people of our world.

What Jesus does ask of us is that we be followers of His way, walking in His footsteps while letting Him form us in His own image and likeness. What Jesus does teach, and I'm going to paraphrase His words here, is that we can only give to others the respect, love, kindness, compassion and mercy that we have for ourselves. Oh, sure, we can pretend to be loving, kind and merciful to others when we don't really have it in us, but sooner or later people will suss out our sham and shallow acting.

Instead, Jesus says that the amount we measure out is the amount we will be given back, a full measure, pressed down, shaken and running over will poured into our lap. This is how we get the power to give to others the respect, kindness and compassion we've received. On this point Jesus is clear, in today's gospel text and throughout His life.

We receive what we're to give to others in the same way that He did; from God's free abundant goodness to us and from no other source.

This is why, before talking about any rewards that may come our way, Jesus says that we are to be like the Most High God who is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked and be as compassionate to others as God is compassionate to us. I'm sure that you've realised that in these words Jesus is talking about us. Aren't we to be counted amongst the ungrateful and the wicked? Aren't we part of that great mob always in need of God's compassion and forgiveness? We'd better be, because if we think we're not, if we think we're already perfect and a few steps up the ladder above everyone else then we'll have no need whatsoever of God or of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Moreover, we'll never ask for or experience God's love and care for us, which means that we'll never be able to live it gratefully and hand this gift on to others with sincerity of spirit and generosity of heart.

As Pope Francis put it to us earlier this week; We live in a time in which it is common to criticise the Church, to point out its inconsistencies, its sins, which in reality are our inconsistencies, our sins, because the Church has always been a people of sinners ever in need of encountering God's mercy, forgiveness and compassion.

Back then to St. Paul who explains to us that Jesus is the new heavenly Adam come to bring us the saving kindness and mercy of God. All of us are born from the earthly Adam, but now by our Baptism into Christ, we are also reborn in the heavenly Adam, Jesus Christ, and so we bear His image. The Psalm of our Mass told us what that image is; the kindness

and mercy of the Lord. It's this grace and gift that we are to seek and welcome, letting grow strong within us, so that by living in God we can act like God, passing on to others what we have ourselves received.