

By Their Fruits, You Shall Know Them!

Today's Gospel, grounded in our first reading, the book of Sirach, is a series of indirectly related separate sayings of Jesus harvested into one place in Luke's Sermon on the Plain, his version of Sermon on the Mount. The three expressions have to do with the blind leading the blind, the splinter in a companion's eye, and a good tree and its fruits.

Let us begin with the last- bearing good fruits- actions speak louder than voice. Sometimes we encounter people in our lives, and we are so inspired and touched by the way they treat and talk to us that we start immediately to thank God for that person's gift. Conversely, sometimes we encounter people, and the way they treat and speak to us makes us pray not to encounter anybody like that in our life. I believe all of us would like to meet the former person who inspires us by treating us.

Part of the fruits we are called to bear today is the fruit of patience and not judging others, which Luke challenges us to make an effort to remove the wooden beam (log of wood) in our eyes before looking for a splinter (fragments) to remove from somebody's eyes. This invitation is not correcting another person's mistakes, but we give corrections with love and patience, knowing that nobody is perfect. Judging others without love and patience makes us the self-proclaimed righteous or upright.

Humility helps us to know that even when we do well, it is the grace of God. Our self-proclaimed righteousness can make us even be in denial of our mistakes and see the errors of others widely. It can make us, even when we say the prayer, 'I confess,' to pray- not through my fault, but their faults. I remember growing up with my five siblings and four younger ones. My mum will always remind me that whenever I point and accuse them with my index finger, the rest of the four fingers also charge me.

Once we are mindful of our struggles, that will help us be more patient and tolerate others as Jesus did. This becomes the power of exemplary good lives than examples of power. We become people who can see to lead others through the right way and not blind people that will lead others to fall into a pit. As we begin the Holy Season of Lent this week, let us ask the good Lord to help us continue using opportunities we have to bear good fruits and be good examples to others. Amen.