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Commentary on the Gospel: Understanding and Loving

Gospel for the Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle C) and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 6:39-43*)

He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is

in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Commentary

In last Sunday's Gospel Jesus asked us to show great charity towards those who see themselves as our enemies and who hate us (*Lk 6:27-38*). With another short collection of sayings, the Master now asks us for the same degree of heroism in our daily life. If we need to be understanding and forgiving with those who persecute us or hold us in contempt, so much the more should we treat with great refinement and humility those God has placed alongside us. And we need to do so bearing in mind Saint Josemaría's humorous remark: "none of us is going to achieve sanctity by dealing with Prester John of the Indies, but rather through our dealings with the people we have right here beside us" (Andres Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, Scepter, p. 150, footnote 133).

In the first place, Jesus warns of a subtle and frequent danger in the

way we treat others: progressive forgetfulness of our own defects, while we focus our attention on the defects of others and even project our own shortcomings on them. “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” Those who fail to struggle first against their own defects are blind when it comes to helping others.

Employing the Semitic hyperbole “the speck in another person’s eye and the log in your own,” Jesus warns us of this sign of a lack of humility. A speck in the eye is very irritating; it prevents a person from seeing clearly and requires the help of others to remove it. But it would be much more annoying and bothersome to have a whole log; it would even lead us to look ridiculous before others, who would point out to us the clear evidence of our own faults.

The solution to this danger is clear: a personal examination of conscience that is both humble and demanding, and an understanding imbued with charity towards others. As Saint Josemaría said when speaking about married love: “Each of us has his own character, his personal taste, his moods—at times his bad moods—and his defects. But we all have likeable aspects in our personality as well, and for this reason, and many others, everyone can be loved. It is possible to live happily together when everyone tries to correct his own defects and makes an effort to overlook the faults of others. That is to say, when there is love which cancels out and overcomes everything that might seem to be a motive for coldness or disagreement. On the other hand, if husband and wife dramatize their little differences and reproach each other for their defects and mistakes, they put an end

to peace and run the risk of killing their love” (*Conversations*, no. 108).

The Apostle Saint John insists that Jesus asks us to love one another not “in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (*1 Jn* 3:18). It may be easy to denounce the defects of others. It is more difficult, but much more effective, to encourage others to correct themselves through the example and witness of our personal struggle. Perhaps that’s why Jesus also points out in this Gospel passage that trees are known by their fruits. Jesus encourages us to have a heart like his that bears witness with deeds to an immense charity. As Pope Francis said, “one is recognized as a good Christian, just as a tree is recognized by its fruits.” In union with Jesus, “our whole person is transformed by the grace of the Spirit: soul, intellect, will, affections, and even the body, because we are a unity of spirit and body. We receive a

new way of being, the life of Christ becomes ours: we can think like Him, act like Him, see the world and what is in it with the eyes of Jesus” (Audience, 3 May 2015). Then it will be easy for us to be humble and understanding, to help others to improve, and to show refined charity with deeds and in truth.

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