

## 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

### My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is very easy to find fault with things and people. For instance:

There goes the Jones family, late again for Mass, and walking down the aisle to the front seats so everyone can admire how well they dress.

Everyone likes Helen, but she talks too much about her family.

The paper man arrives early enough in the morning, but he doesn't throw the paper up to the front door.

No matter how good a person or a thing may be, it is easy to find some fault with them. And while it is easy to find faults in others, it is just as easy to overlook our faults. Or as Jesus says in today's gospel: **“Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?”** Notice the difference between a splinter and a wooden beam. A minor fault compared with a big one. Why are we like that? Is it because we are naturally jealous or negative and critical? Or maybe because we have lived with our faults for so many years that we get used to them, or perhaps have never known that we had the problem?

In the letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes the Mystical Body of Christ. As baptized Christians, we are each one of us, a part of the same Mystical Body. And Saint Paul makes note of how different each one of us is. **“God put our bodies together in such a way that even the parts that seem the least important are valuable. He did**

**this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others.”** It is an excellent concept, that each of us born of Christ in baptism is so intimately connected with each other that there is a unity. But this is not a natural unity. By natural birth our fallen nature seems to oppose many areas of the Mystical Body. We tend not to see the good in others as much as we see the bad. We misjudge the actions of others very readily. We allow certain prejudices to arise that prevent us from being close to others. There may be some individuals whose mere presence makes us uncomfortable or even angry. Such attitudes and reactions are certainly not compatible with the notion of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Today’s gospel from Saint Luke immediately follows his beautiful explanation of unconditional love, which states that we are to love even our enemies. This kind of love is not natural. It can come only with the grace of God and because of much work and effort. But this is precisely the challenge of today’s gospel for each of us. To be so positive of all other people that we can accept them for who and what they are, overcome those occasions when we tend to misjudge others, stress the good in others, and hope they can do the same for us.

It sounds like a kind of Christian dreamland. But Christ came to change the world, to transform the world according to the will of His Father. Today’s gospel is a bold challenge for each of us as followers of Jesus.

Bishop Potter of New York was sailing for Europe. As he boarded the large ocean liner, he found another passenger sharing the cabin. After looking at his quarters, he returned to the purser's desk and asked if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that normally he never did this sort of thing, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who would occupy the other bed, and judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person.

The purser accepted the responsibility of caring for valuables and remarked, **“It is alright, bishop. I will be happy to take care of them for you. The other man has just been up here and deposited all his valuables for the same reason.”**

Jesus calls hypocrites, those who notice a tiny splinter in others but are blind to the wooden beam in their own. They are unaware of their shortcomings, but they criticize the faults of others. These people are often negative and unfriendly. They habitually focus on the bad side of everything, especially the bad side of people. They are pruned to criticize and find fault. Maybe because they are looking for someone without a stain, but **“He who would find a friend without fault will never find him.”** The reason is simple: there is no one without fault and no ideal man, only real people.

The appealing thing about faultfinding in others is that it takes the focus off our deficiencies and helps us to feel ever so self-righteous.

Instead of criticizing others, why not care for them? If we care for them, we will listen to what they are saying and what they are trying to say with or without words. If we care for them, we will not impose our views, plans, ideas, discipline, advice, correction, guidance, or judgment. If we care for them, we won't jump at every opportunity to point out their mistakes to make them feel foolish. If we care for them, we will show them how talented, capable, genuine, original, creative, skilled, friendly, trustworthy, resourceful, good, and lovable they are.

Instead of criticizing others, why don't we try also to know ourselves? How? There are three ways:

First, we can know ourselves by what we do. Our work identifies us. But that is not always a good way to know ourselves. When we do nothing, does it mean that we are nothing already? Sick people who are confined and cannot do anything, are they nothing? So, we do not judge ourselves simply by what we do.

Second, we can be known by what we say. But sometimes we are careful with our words because we don't like to hurt or make enemies. We are careful with our words because we don't want to lose our friends.

Third, we can be known by what we think. Because we do things according to what we believe is right. We do not judge ourselves in terms of what we do; neither in terms of what we say, but in terms of what we think because no one controls how we think. We think

according to our pleasure. For example, it is easy to be tolerant. It is very easy to be good. It is very easy to be good inside the church. It is very easy to smile inside the church because everybody seems to be good here. And so, when we go to communion, we quietly stay in line because we are prepared and ready for it. But when we see someone who does not remain in line or hear a baby crying or a child running inside the church, our impulse to care for these undisciplined children is very much in us. And so, we can know ourselves in the way we think and in the way we react to a given situation.

That is why in our gospel today, Jesus asks us to search as carefully as possible for our faults as we do for the faults of others. Because when we are aware of our weaknesses and strive to overcome them, knowing that we also have faults, we are slow to judge and swift to give the benefit of the doubt. Socrates says that nature has given us two ears, two eyes, and only one tongue, so we should hear more than we speak. But now it is the opposite: we speak more and hear less, especially if a good man commits wrongs, even once, all his good works are gone and erased. So, if we cannot say something good about another person, it is better to remain silent.

### **My Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

To end this sharing, I would like to give some thoughts for reflection. There are three sayings:

**“Speaking without thinking is like shooting without aiming.”**

**“Think twice before you speak and then say it to yourself.”**  
**“Judge people from where they stand, not where you stand.”**

**Amen.**