

HOMILY -4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable to Thee, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen”

How easily don't we judge others? Today, our Gospel has Jesus condemning the uncharitable attitude of being judgemental (St. Luke 6:37–42) during the Sermon He preached on the Mount. Mercy will always preclude judgment... And mercy is the towering rule of Christ's kingdom (cf. St. Luke 10:36–37; St. Matt. 9:13).

So, to declare the demands of true discipleship, Jesus presents the Sermon on the Mount. In it, He introduces the kind of life those who seek to follow Him should lead. His words are worth reflecting on and carefully heeding, especially given the tumultuous times we find ourselves living in... Surrounded by distress, sickness, pestilence, plague, death, and with all kinds of evil abounding. Mercy seems scarce and in such short supply. Perhaps George Eliot was correct, when he said, *“We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves.”*

Many of Christian believers, especially clergy, sadly fall short here. We too easily, like the Pharisees, tend to imitate and emulate the holiness of God, which is good, but never at the cost of His mercy. And so Jesus in our Gospel, essentially reformulates the teachings of Leviticus 19:2. Under the *Old Covenant*, Israel's pursuit of holiness, had, in effect, separated them from the ungodly, sinners, Gentiles, unclean, impure persons, who too were desperately in need of God's mercy, grace, forgiveness, healing and love. Under the *New Covenant*, which the Son of Man advocates, holiness is given a new focus — holiness is defined as mercy that reaches out to those otherwise deemed unworthy. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (which Jesus teaches just four chapters later in St. Luke's Gospel, 10:25–37) drives this truth home: Love of God must accompany love of neighbour.

Sanctimonious pharisaic self-righteousness and arrogant pride — thinking that we are better and holier than others — blinds us to their needs, and only serves to drive them away from the mercy and grace of God. Jesus really detests 'holier-than-thou' antagonistic postures, which may sometimes be subtle or systemic, but are clearly manifested in the judgmental attitudes we adopt towards other individuals or groups.

The problem here is that it is very quick and easy to be uncharitable and judgemental by diagnosing and pointing out the faults of others, but much harder to see and identify our own mistakes. We are far too easily blinded by our very own “judgmentalness” (St. Luke 6:39). Which is why Jesus asks and teaches:

“Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.” (St. Luke 6:39–42). The NIV translation speaks of the “speck of sawdust” in another's eye, versus the “plank” in your own.” The challenge is clearly set out here:

What kind of “specks” are easiest for you to critically point out in others?

Sadly, judgmental attitudes permeate the human heart. They are found in individuals, they are in groups, cultures, institutions, and yes, sadly even so, within the Church. And although it can be a blinding sin, the good news here is that Jesus has taught us a better way. He who was without sin, took on human flesh in order to redeem us. St Paul, of this, writes:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things

in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:5–11).

It is all about mercy, mercy, mercy!

Now, while we rightly shouldn't ignore sin, evil, and wrongdoings — there is a righteous kind of judgment that we are all called to carefully exercise with great discernment (cf. St. John 7:24) — we should not be so preoccupied and worried about the sins and shortcomings of others, that we forget about our very own. And neither are we to enter into censorious, self-righteous, hypocritical, unfair, and uncharitable judgments... Lest we forget about our own “planks”!

So, as Jesus teaches us, let us reach out to others, with the same selfless mercy, grace, forgiveness, healing, and sacrificial love that Christ Himself extends towards us. Let us be agents and ministers of mercy in a cruel, harsh, envious, jealous, selfish, fallen, and judgmental world. Let our Churches be sanctuaries filled with the fragrant aroma of mercy, charity, forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and peace. And, let us not enter into judgment.

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” — Jesus of Nazareth (St. Matt. 9:13).

+ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*



Pieter Bruegel's Blind leading the Blind

BISHOP ANDREW MUKUYAMBA



Bishop Andrew was consecrated in 2015, having been Vicar General of Zambia for many years. He was a close friend to Bishop Wellington and me, and we had travelled many times to the TAC College of Bishops meetings together. He was a loving and humble Christian leader, full of the Holy Spirit. He was dearly loved by his people and will be sorely missed. Bishop Andrew died of Covid-19 on Thursday 24th June 2021 in Lusaka.

“Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.”