

Encouragement Encouragement

August 2018 – Issue 85

Judge not... for you will be judged

We all know the very sombre moments portrayed in films when a judge sits in front of a person and pronounces judgement on them; guilty or not guilty. These are often done in accordance with the law and the necessity to bring about both punishment and justice. Sometimes the judgment seems harsh, other times, for some people, not hard enough. The fact that we have opinions on this shows us that in reality all of us take a stance, a position and attitude and in fact judge each other. While this is so in a court room how much more often does it happen in everyday life but sadly almost making us unaware of what is actually going on in our hearts and minds.

We can very clearly see this in the everyday of our lives. It is a rare person that instead of making a comment, whether defending someone or attributing blame, stands back from such and says that we cannot judge- we are not in someone's shoes. This of course takes great courage and perhaps humility because most often we get accused of 'sitting' on the fence, ducking the issue, or worse being weak. These 'judgment situations' are so much part of our culture that we almost perform in this way without a moment's reflection as to what we are doing. You only have to glimpse at any newsreel, newspaper or listen to everyday conversation to discover that a judgmental attitude is deeply embedded in our society. 'Chat Shows' and political discussions overflow with comments that sometimes do not truly evaluate but force people into antagonistic positions often of hate, or at the very least, disharmony.

There are so many levels on which this occurs that it is almost impossible to separate the instances when they occur. The central issue is therefore, where does opinion end and judgement begin? It would be impossible for anyone to go around without having any thought on any manner of subject. Indeed, it would not be constructive or helpful because 'thought' and opinion often lead to constructive action. We are called to build up the Kingdom of God and all use our natural attributes to bring this about. As St Paul says, there are Teachers, Apostles, Healers and we all have differing approaches- as he and St Peter demonstrate. But there is a huge difference between having an opinion and making a judgment that makes action difficult for anyone else. When we hold our opinions so strongly that we are unwilling to bend or even

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consider that we may be wrong or even not quite right, we often stop the truth of a situation from being brought forth. We can share our opinions, but these should not affect how we relate to one another. That in essence is the difference between a judgmental attitude and a loving one. The area of life where this is most evident and that lies hidden even to ourselves is where someone stands in opposition to our treasured beliefs about ourselves and who we are or what we want. We can see this in attitudes to racial equality, religious beliefs on all levels, in politics and in social attitudes. In these areas of concern many things affect how we see things but surely we are asked to sometimes stand aside and discover what is true and what comes simply from *prejudice*. We use this word somewhat flippantly and therefore deny it, while the real issue of judgement goes on undealt with. There is no one who can truly say that they do not carry a little prejudice on any of these issues.

Yet there is a much more subtle area of judgement that can almost pass us by. How many times do we reject something that someone says or does simply because of what they are wearing or what they sound like or what they look like? How often do we discard the importance of a comment because the person does not belong to 'our set' or group.... How often do we prefer to stray in our comfort zones rather than explore the possibility of change or growth? Very often people are marginalised with labels put round their necks because they do not conform to 'our' way of thinking.

Clearly there are issues of justice and rights and wrongs, but they are often to be taken aside from the person or as the old adage goes... 'the singer not the song' or 'the sin not the sinner'.... yes, it is hard to stand back and not judge the person...but we are called as Christians to fundamental Charity... love at all costs. We see this in heroic instances of forgiveness and as well in tolerant action.

During the month of August we have many important feasts, the Feast of the Transfiguration and St Monica to instance just a few. Where would St Augustine be, if in anger or frustration, his mother had simply not cared enough to pray him into change without condemnation? He was on the wrong road but she kept on praying and asking others to help him.

"When you have Jesus you have all you need"

Father, with no wife, children or home, Burundi

When we judge others for whatever reason we can also overlook that God's love extends to all people and that He chooses whom He wants whenever He has a specific plan. God reads the heart of a person not his behaviour or outward appearance of clothing. How many times does He call someone to a specific rôle, service or ministry that others would have shunned or ignored? Sometimes He chooses the least of His people in the world's eyes. This is especially true in the case of Mary our Mother. He chose her because she was humble and obedient - not powerful or prestigious. This month we have the feast of the Assumption which reaffirms what the Lord thought of her. He chose David, the least of his father's sons, a shepherd, to be anointed as king and then encouraged him, even though he failed so often, yet served the Lord. He chose St Peter the impetuous and Paul the zealot Jew. When we look at the lives of great Saints many would not be chosen by us as moral leaders or Icons for our times: They certainly did not have celebrity status. Yet he called them and transfigured them into holy people. The Apostles were astounded when they saw Jesus on Mount Tabor. They had judged him as a leader and Messiah but not realized yet His truly magnificent identity. Yes, they too had judged him for what they hoped He would be rather than what He was. The Feast of the Transfiguration reminds us that God sees as we truly are, and He enables a transformation to happen. This is why we must not judge each other. If there is any other judgment to be made it is the Lord's right to do it but He judges as a *Just*



Judge and often to bring us to a better place with a change of heart. We also forget that the judgement we pass on others does come back to us. It is not uncommon to find that we get caught up in a spiral once we have falsely assessed something and it bounces back to show us not only that we are in error, but also that we are at fault. Sometimes this requires a reassessment of ourselves if we are honest and a great deal of 'Humble Pie.'

A wise Bishop had the foresight not to look at the intellectual poverty of a seminarian, Jean Vianney...(Feast also celebrated this month), and to ordain him after he answered one question about the Real Presence.

A Special Pastor said the following....

"St John Vianney, the Curé of Ars performed so poorly in his priestly studies that the seminary officials seriously questioned if he was intelligent enough to be ordained. His first parish priest considered him too stupid to preach. Yet as the years passed people came to him for Confession from all over Europe. We look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. In the 1st Reading Amos was despised by Amaziah because he was only a shepherd, yet God chose him to be His prophet. A priest

is only human, but God uses him to forgive the sins of the people and change what appears to be bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus upon the Altar. God can use any ordinary substance, any insignificant event, any poorly looking person as a vehicle for His presence. God's choices are not always ours". ++

So let us judge less and love more. Halina Holman

Pope Francis

We are all masters; we are all experts, when it comes to justifying ourselves. We all have an alibi to justify our shortcomings, our sins. We so often respond with an 'I don't know!' face, or with an 'I didn't do it, it must have been someone else!' face. We are always ready to play innocent. Before and after confession, in your life, in your prayer, are you able to blame yourself? Or is it easier to blame others? When one learns to blame himself he is merciful with others. And he is able to say: "Who am I to judge him, if I am capable of doing worse things?" This is an important phrase: "Who am I to judge another?" This is understood in the light of Jesus's words: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful," and with his call not to judge. How we like to judge others, to speak ill of them! Yet the Lord is clear: "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.

Rome 2017

**Jesus let us listen to those we think of as enemies
Reach out to those who are not of our kind,
Love those who need to be valued,
And accept that we are such to others.
Amen**

Feast Days in August

1st St Alphonsus Liguori 2nd St Peter Julian Eymard

4th St Jean Marie Vianney

6th **The Transfiguration of the Lord**

8th St Dominic,

St Mary MacKillop

9th St Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein)

14th St Maximilian Kolbe

15th **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Oblg**

17th **Our Lady of Knock**

20th St Bernard

21st St Pius X

22nd **The Queenship of Mary**

23rd St Rose of Lima

24 St Bartholomew, Apostle

25th St. Louis

27th St Monica

28th St Augustine

30th St Margaret Clitheroe