

Fr. Romeo Homily
March 3, 2019
8th Sunday Ordinary Time (C)

Meeting one of his parishioners on the street, a pastor said, "I haven't seen you in church for a long time, Johnny. What happened?"

"I've stopped going to church Father. There are too many hypocrites there". The pastor replied, "Well, theirs is always room for one more".

Hypocrisy is somehow part of each of us. We all have the tendency to judge others first before ourselves. And sometimes when it comes to judging others, we do the exact opposite, we find no excuses for their lapses and suspect their motives to be of the worst sort.

But that is not all. The worst is yet to come. Since we find painful the sight of our own shortcomings, we often use the psychological defense mechanism called projection to get rid of our unsavory traits and attribute them to others. This is a mostly unconscious reflex and only the most honest of persons will recognize it when it is operating. Most of the time we routinely suppose, if we were cheating on our spouse for example, that most people cheat on their spouse. This automatic reaction protects the ego from the anxiety of having to face its own fault. Projection is one of our common modes of operating with other people. What we are, we spontaneously think they also are. It is as simple as that. Have you experienced this in your life? I did. I was accusing others of the things that I myself was guilty of.

Here we should remember the wise legal saying, "In a court of law the man who dispenses from the services of a lawyer and chooses to plead his own case is defended by a fool." Why is this? Because we are always secretly biased in our favor. We resist admitting our wrongs. Such an exercise is so painful and humiliating that we almost always whitewash our sins and manage to turn a blind eye to our transgressions. When we do confess them, we either rationalize them away or minimize them or excuse them. True, we do admit that we are sinners in general. But let no one point out to us any particular sin of ours! Very rarely will we agree that we are guilty of a concrete offense against God or neighbor.

Because of this state of affairs, we would be wise to follow Jesus' advice and give up judging other people's heart when our own heart is so devious and so unfathomable. We may—and often must—judge other people's actions: But what is behind those actions (motivations, intentions) and takes it roots in the other person's heart—that is beyond our reach and is for God's eyes only.

Our business is to watch ourselves, insure the purity of our motives, and try our best to please God in all things. That should keep us busy for quite a while.

Let us conclude with a little story pertinent to today's Gospel.

An editorial of the London Times once raised the question, "What's wrong with the World?" It invited its readers to respond. An overwhelming number did. Among them was G.K. Chesterton, one of the great Christian writers and thinkers of the 20th century. Out of all the letters, his was the shortest, the simplest, and the most on target. In response to the question, "What's wrong with the World?" Chesterton wrote, "I am". And you know what? He was right. So am I. So are you. So are we all.