

## GOSPEL

LUKE 6:39-45

Jesus told a parable to his disciples, 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart.'

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today's Gospel passage presents brief parables with which Jesus seeks to indicate to his disciples the path to follow in order to live wisely. With the question: can a blind man lead a blind man?", he wishes to emphasize that a leader cannot be blind, but must see clearly, that is, he must have wisdom in order to lead wisely, otherwise he risks causing damage to the people who are entrusted to him. Jesus thus calls attention to those who have educational responsibility or who govern: spiritual pastors, public authorities, legislators, teachers, parents, exhorting them to be aware of their delicate role and to always discern the right path on which to lead people.

And Jesus borrows a wise expression in order to designate himself as an example of teacher and leader to be followed: "A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher". It

is a call to follow his example and his teaching in order to be sound and wise leaders. And this teaching is included above all in the Sermon on the Mount — which, in the past three Sundays the liturgy has offered us in the Gospel — indicating the attitude of meekness and of mercy in order to be honest, humble and just people. In today's passage we find another significant phrase, which exhorts us to be neither presumptuous nor hypocritical. It says: "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?". So often, as we all know, it is easy or convenient to see and condemn the flaws and sins of others, without being able to see our own with such clarity. We always hide our flaws; we even hide them from ourselves; while it is easy to see the flaws of others. The temptation is to be indulgent with ourselves — lenient with ourselves — and severe with others. It is always useful to help one's neighbour with wise advice, but while we observe and correct our neighbour's flaws, we must be aware that we too have flaws. If I believe I have none, I cannot condemn or correct others. We all have flaws: everyone. We must be aware of them, and, before condemning others, we must look within ourselves. In this way we can act in a credible way, with humility, witnessing to charity.

How can we understand if our view is clear or if it is obstructed by a log? And again Jesus tells us so: "no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit". The fruits are actions but also words. A tree's quality can also be understood from words. Indeed, those who are good draw good from their hearts and their mouths, and those who are bad draw bad, by practicing the most damaging exercise among us, which is grumbling, gossiping, speaking ill of others. This destroys. It destroys the family, destroys school, destroys the workplace, destroys the neighbourhood. Wars begin from the tongue. Let us consider a bit this lesson of Jesus and ask ourselves the question: do I speak ill of others?

Do I always seek to tarnish others? Is it easier for me to see others' flaws than my own? And let us try to correct ourselves at least a little: it will do us all good.

Let us invoke Mary's support and intercession in order to follow the Lord on this journey.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In what ways do you open yourself to Jesus, so that you can be more like him?
- What are some 'planks' or 'splinters' in your own eye that you need to remove with God's help?
- What good things do you desire God to place in your heart which you can 'draw on' so as to be a better disciple?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.