

If you can't tell the difference between a log and a speck you are a hypocrite. Well that sounds easy enough – end of homily because anybody can recognize a log, but you need a magnifying glass to find a speck. How dumb would I have to be to be a hypocrite in this observation? Do we really want to answer that question?

I mean imagine someone walking into your house, knocking over your furniture and breaking windows with a giant log sticking out of his eye. Then after half of the furniture in the room has been destroyed the log-bearer announces boldly that they have come to remove a speck from your own eye. Your immediate response would be to get this hypocrite out of my house before they destroy the rest of it.

This is exactly the image that Jesus intends to portray when he says: “Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, ‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out

of your neighbour's eye.” Jesus' choice of words is devastatingly brilliant pointing the reality of the danger of misjudgment. Please note I said misjudgement here - in Catholic Church I have seen two extremes. On the one hand I have seen people judge people so harshly and broadly; they do so by the vice of pride; and on the other hand, I have seen people who say I can't judge because Jesus said so.

The second extreme is surprisingly more common. I mean how many times have we heard the verse “Judge not, lest you be judged” How many do people today take that one verse from the Bible and apply it incorrectly? They will tell others that no one can tell them that what they are doing is wrong, because that would be judging them and that's wrong. Then they whip out the other common the verse where Jesus said, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone”. And since we are all sinners, then that means that no one can tell anyone that what they are doing is sinful.

This is a strange philosophy and one that needs to be understood. First off, “to judge”, as it is used in “Judge not, lest you be judged”, means to condemn someone on moral grounds,

then it is to pass judgment. Only God can condemn and pass final judgment. “To judge” as it is used here does not mean that people cannot discern that an act is sinful, nor does it mean we can’t tell the sinner that he or she is sinning. If that were so, then parents could not ever tell their child that it is wrong to lie, to cheat, or to steal. And if the child were caught in the act, then no parent could tell him or her that they were wrong. And they could certainly not ever punish the child, because there could never be any wrongdoing. This would be quite odd. Or a judge who wouldn’t be able to make a judgment – well he or she would be out of a job pretty quickly if we told them you can’t judge people.

Unfortunately, in today’s society, someone caught in habitual sin will often say; who are you to judge me? But not judging or gently correct their behaviour actually flies in the face of a spiritual work of mercy – to admonish the sinner; meaning to rebuke or correct the sinner – and this is our duty. However, we cannot do this as hypocrites.

Hypocrites correct the faults of others while not dealing with similar or greater faults within themselves. Only when we are sincere about our own

failings and consequently working on healing our failings can we become effective in helping others overcome their failings. It’s as if I was asked to rescue someone who has fallen into the muddy pit and I jump in with them and cry out, “I’m here to rescue you.” Well let’s just say I would have to wait for superman or Spiderman to save our behinds. I would be of no help.

So, this begs the question: How can I receive the grace to remove the log in my eye; so that I can help my neighbour to see the speck in their own eye? This will take one virtue – humility.

This coming lent we are going to be starting a new homily series called Attitude Adjustment and its going to focus on spiritually assisting us to grow in the virtue of humility. Within this series we will also be having a time to reflect on the previous Sunday’s homily at our Soup and Stations event, starting a week from Ash Wednesday. At this experience we will watch a brief video expanding on the homily series and we will have some time to share our contemplations through some thought-provoking questions. The hope is we can all grow in the humility, so that we can see the log in

our eye so that we can help our brothers and sisters see the speck in their own.

From my own experience I can tell you humility is one of the most difficult virtues to master but when we do master it, all the other virtues we require fall right into place. The humble person can acknowledge their sinfulness and yet give gentle, honest correction at other people's failings without coming across as arrogant or rude. The humble person judges people only based on their words, actions or inaction but know that only God can judge the mind and the heart; the intention of the person. The humble person doesn't brag about how well they are doing spiritually but see each day they can grow more and more to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. The humble person can discern if they are spiritually blind and receive the healing they need especially from the sacrament of reconciliation. In other words, the humble person imitates and reflects the life of Christ – the one who came to free us from sin and death; the one who brought us freedom and victory from the cross; the one who loves and desires what is best for his flock.

Lent is a time for prayer, almsgiving and fasting; and often time we fast

from eating chocolate or tv watching – and that's not a bad sacrifice – but why not make this lent special by practicing these actions in order to strengthen the virtue of humility.

It is not to say fasting from something is a bad thing but rather than just giving something up for 40 days and going back to it at the end of our Lenten journey let's truly go into the spiritual desert with our Lord and let's work on our virtues especially humility. Not to sound heretical but Jesus is honestly not going fully care about if Fr. Danny didn't eat a mini chocolate bar from Betty's candy stash in her office during lent, but he will truly be concerned if Fr. Danny doesn't have the proper virtues formed in by the end of his life. Because all of us can attain to Christian virtue and holiness, no matter in what condition of life we live and no matter what our life work may be.