

Homily 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2026 - 'He who hasn't sinned cast the first stone.'

It's interesting how many people, both consciously and unconsciously, make sweeping judgements. We tend to negatively mark certain families, groups and even neighbourhoods without any attempt to know them. 'The Kellys are a good family, but the Stuarts are bit dodgy.', 'Oh, that's not a good area of town.', 'We better shut up shop as there's a traveller wedding in town today!' The Jews, at the time of Jesus and probably before and after, were just as prejudiced, 'What good can come from Nazareth?' (Nathanael comments as he is encouraged by Philip to 'come and see' The Messiah) (Jn 1:46). 'Bethlehem, the least of the cities of Judah...' (foretells the prophet (Micah 5:2) highlighting Bethlehem as a small humble city, the surprising birthplace of Jesus) (Mt 2:6)

Isaiah in today's First Reading foretells, it is indeed from a surprisingly and unexpectedly humble, lowly and insignificant town in Galilee, that THE LIGHT, LIFE and GOOD who will destroy DARKNESS, DEATH and SIN, will come. The Messiah will be from the negatively marked Nazareth! St Paul in today's Second Reading also calls on the fledgling Church in Corinth to stop quarrelling and refrain from prejudicially negatively marking certain teachers over others, "I follow Paul", or 'I follow Apollos', or 'I follow Cephas', or 'I follow Christ.' Paul issues a stern reprimand, 'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?".

In today's Gospel Jesus, born in Bethlehem the least of the cities of Judah and raised in much maligned Nazareth, fulfils Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus goes on, without prejudice, to recruit his inner circle. His first calling was of fishermen. These men were lower-class working people who were manual labourers, part of the peasant / working class. They weren't elite, educated, or powerful. Fishing was physically demanding and dirty and fishermen were seen as rough and uneducated. Yet Jesus choosing fishermen underscored his message that God's Kingdom wasn't reserved for the elite, that his mission was radically accessible and turned social expectations upside down. He then compounded the scandal and went on to call Matthew, a sinner and hated tax-collector, Mary Magdalen, a prostitute, Simon the Zealot, a revolutionary and murderer and others living on the margins of society. These are the very people we too would perhaps prejudge and discriminate against. Calling such disciples Jesus was breaking down one of the scourges of society, prejudice and discrimination which leads to negative stereotyping, suspicion and division. Most of the disciples called by Jesus were fragile and vulnerable human beings prone to ambition, (James and John) betrayal under pressure (Peter and Judas Iscariot) and doubt (Thomas).

I think the message is clear. We Catholics and Christians in general must get off our moral high horse and accept our vulnerability and sinfulness as human beings and disciples of Jesus. We must acknowledge that we have no right to judge others. We must avoid prejudice as it has no part in Jesus' Kingdom. We as a Church must realise that we need Jesus to redeem us from our moral failures. Certain Church Leaders must also accept that they are as weak and vulnerable as anyone else, refrain from the judging of their sheep and accept their own need of Jesus' redemptive love. Didn't Peter, the First Leader, say, 'Go away from me for I am a sinful man.' Didn't James, Bishop of Jerusalem, humbly suffer martyrdom despite his ambition to sit at 'the right' of Jesus in his Kingdom. Didn't 'Doubting Thomas' humbly fall at the feet of the Risen Lord exclaiming, 'My Lord and my God.'

Let all of us therefore, like the early disciples accept our sinfulness, abandon our quest for power and acknowledge that our faith is also at times fragile. Isn't it so liberating to stop pretending to be perfect, knowing that Jesus came 'for sinners, the healthy have no need of the doctor.' Now how stunningly beautiful is that!