

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

For many weeks we have been hearing Vladimir Putin tell world leaders that he had no intentions of invading Ukraine. All the while Russian troops were building up along Ukraine's borders. On Thursday it was clear that what the Russian leader was saying and what he was doing were not the same. Our readings today help us to reflect upon how we are all called to be people of our word.

Today we have heard the last part of the sermon on the plain in Luke's gospel. Today's gospel begins with the words "Jesus told a parable to his disciples". But what we hear is more like a series of images to reinforce what Jesus had taught about becoming his disciples. Jesus tells us that the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher.

"Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit?" That powerful image leads us to reflect upon leadership. Jesus wants us to be people who are well trained disciples so that we can be like him. One thing we need to learn from Jesus is about judging others. We have no right to criticise the small imperfections of others, the splinters in their eyes, if we have not seen first our own limitations, the planks of wood that blind us. When we have taken the plank out of our own eye,

we might at least be able to see clearly enough to take the splinter out of the eye of someone else.

The image of the fruit telling us what kind of a tree it comes from leads on to a reflection upon where the good or bad things we do come from. "A good person draws what is good from the goodness in their heart, the bad person draws what is bad from the store of badness." I find that very challenging. What is it that I have stored up in my heart? I hope that there are only good things there. But perhaps when I want to test that out, I might think of a particular person that I have a lot to do with. Do I think positively or negatively about that person? Do I see first their gifts or their limitations? Do I focus on their strengths or their weaknesses?

Perhaps another way of testing out what is in our hearts is to recall what we heard last week about forgiveness. Are we people who forgive readily or are we people who hold on to the hurts that we have suffered so that we can use them to hurt others. Are we people who never forget an insult or are we people who choose to move on unburdened by whatever way others may have spoken about us?

The first reading today was chosen to prepare us to listen to the gospel. It was from the Book of Ecclesiasticus. This was written by the Jews living away from Israel in

the last century or so before Christ came. It was written not in Hebrew but in Greek. It is not included among the books of the Bible used by many non-Catholics. But it was accepted by the Christians of the first century as part of the Bible and was quite a favourite with Luke. We hear today three images used to help us to reflect upon how what we say reveals the kind of person that we are. We are all familiar with the role of the sieve the kiln and the orchard. I was attracted to the second image. “The kiln tests the work of the potter, the test of a man in his conversation.”

In a few moments we are going to witness the Baptism of Lilliana Mauravic. The seeds of faith have been sown by her parents and they will now be watered by the waters of Baptism. Lilliana will be given the gift of God’s Spirit and will become one with us a member of God’s family the Church. With the help of her parents and the support of this community she will become a person of faith.

We are about to begin the season of Lent. It is a time when we are invited to be people who do what we say. We are invited to put our faith into action by way of our prayer our fasting and our good works for others. One of the ways that we can do that is through our support of Project Compassion. Let’s take a few minutes to hear what a difference our support of Project Compassion has

made to the lives of those we have helped in previous years.