

9TH SUNDAY IN ORD TIME YEAR A

Homily 1

It is not those who say to me, "Lord, Lord", who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.

The kingdom of heaven ... - the experience of being with God, of breathing the same air, as it were, standing shoulder to shoulder, arms around each other's shoulders, sharing the same vision, the same dreams and hopes, loving all we see with the same inclusive, vibrant love. I'll know I'm there, when I can stand here and look at you all, and love you all easily, personally, freely as the adult persons you are, with the same intense, inclusive love that God has for you all. Whenever, wherever, I can love like that, I'll know the experience of the kingdom.

As Jesus said, *It is not those who say to me, "Lord, Lord", who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.* Of course! When two people love, it's true that: "Your slightest wish is my command!" Of course, I would want what God wants because God's desires and hopes would be also my desires and my hopes. How can I get to that stage? How can I even know my own deepest desires and hopes?

Today's Gospel passage concluded a whole collection of Jesus' moral teachings – what we call the Sermon on the Mount. It's a fascinating collection – teasing us, challenging us, even confronting us, opening up possibilities, inviting us to see life, the world, through eyes enlightened by Jesus' insights, convictions and priorities. It is not a book of rules; but, like parables, it challenges us to think, to check out what we really believe. What was he really driving at?

Jesus took his Jewish heritage seriously – yet his approach to the Law was so different from the approach of many of the experts of his day – the scribes and Pharisees. At the basis of everything was Jesus' sense of God. Jesus knew God as the God who loved, who loved indiscriminately – as he said so strikingly: *who causes his sun to rise on bad people as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest alike.*

That's the way that our heavenly Father is *perfect*.

But how do we know God's will – what love asks of us – in the various, sometimes complicated, situations we find ourselves in every day? Ultimately we need to follow our consciences. It is through our conscience that God speaks personally in the depths of our hearts. It sounds easy. But our consciences need to be formed and informed, or it won't be the voice of God that we hear but a whole chorus of other competing voices as well. How do we recognise God's voice within us? I don't think that there is any easy answer to sorting out that chorus and recognising God's voice within us.

We can look to the Church's teaching – but, of necessity that teaching is usually general. In the real situation, things can seem impossibly complicated. Are we kidding ourselves? What do we really believe? What can we do that sits comfortably with our truest selves and our radical integrity?

To answer those questions, we need to know ourselves. I don't think there is any other option. And that calls for reflection – and prayer. As the Gospels said of Mary: *She treasured these things and pondered them in her heart.* We need to look at life, and its complicated situations, closely. We need to ponder them in the light of what Jesus shared with us. We need to move from our heads into our hearts. And always, overriding everything, our search is empowered and sustained by the God who looks on us with love.

Letting God look at me ... letting God look at me with love ... at me. I am still trying, not by trying hard, but by stopping trying, and by learning simply to be who I already am. "Your slightest wish is my command!" Well, not yet!

Homily 2

The Gospel today referred to people doing things *in the name of Jesus*; or, rather, claiming to do things – fairly remarkable things – in the name of Jesus. Yet, Jesus said of these people: No way! *I don't even know you!* What's going on? What did he mean?

Before we look more closely at what Jesus might have meant, it could be a good idea to look at what we mean, when we say: *In the name of Jesus.* It's a phrase we use a

lot, particularly in our prayers. You probably said it as you entered the church and made the Sign of the Cross over yourself. We began the Mass as the community we are, proclaiming: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Today's Mass will finish with the Prayer after Communion, which in its turn will finish with the words: *We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord;* to which you will all dutifully answer: Amen. What do we mean when we say: *In the name of ...?* As you said it, entering the church, what did you mean?

From what Jesus said: *I don't even know you,* it would seem that, whatever we mean, it isn't always true. When is it true? And how can you tell?

Just before today's passage, which brings to its conclusion the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the way to work out the difference between when it's true and when it's not true – the way to determine who really is the true prophet or the false prophet is by their fruits: *By their their fruits you will know them.* But which fruits? Certainly it's not results; it's not outcomes; it's not success. Today's Gospel supposes that some people were *casting out devils* successfully, and *working miracles* successfully – but not, despite their claims, *in the name of Jesus.* So what are the fruits that we look for?

Today's Gospel offers an answer. The fruits are changed, transformed lifestyle, the lifestyle of those who, as Jesus says, *listen to these words of mine and act on them.* What, specifically, are these words of Jesus? They are simply what Matthew had listed in the Sermon on the Mount which today's passage brings to an end. The lifestyle? Mercy, purity of heart, peace-making; change of heart; love, love of enemies, consistent love – like God's love that is indiscriminate, reaching out to the *good and the bad,* the *honest and dishonest alike.*

In the name of Jesus. It's a funny phrase – where name refers to what identifies someone, but in the sense of what someone is, more than who someone is. We tend to understand name as the reverse, telling us who people are, rather than what they are. We act *in the name of Jesus* to the extent that we become just like Jesus is, we are acting just like Jesus acts. It is a “more or less” reality.

As we truly mature, we allow ourselves to be changed, to be transformed, to become ever more Christ-like, ever more christened. When we were baptized, we were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. More accurately, we were baptized into *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. We were changed. We entered a whole new world – becoming children of God; or, perhaps better, infant children of God. The task across life has been to grow up, allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us, through the choices and decisions we have made, to become ever more christened, ever more Christlike: to live, and act and pray in the same way as Jesus. Hopefully, we have become, increasingly, one with the deepest “what” of Jesus, more and more identified with the unique Jesus, more and more living, acting and praying *in the name of Jesus*.

FR. JOHN McKINNON

=====

For more Homilies and Reflections, [click here](#)

=====