

31st Sunday Ordinary Time – 5-11-17
Malachi 1:14-22:2, 8-10, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13, Matthew 23:1-12

Do we do what we say and what we believe our Christian faith is about – do we practice what we preach – the uneasy answer is NO – not always – we perhaps try but sometimes we don't even do that. As Christians we are more like the Pharisees and Scribes than we like to admit – *no not us – our place of honour – not our community – not me*. Are we comfortable where we are sitting – where your place of honour is – does our view look the same each week?

We Catholics have had this Gospel drummed into us so much so, that we have made it an art form. We have skewed it to such an extent that it has made us all Pharisees with a false sense of humility in what we do. It is perhaps an excuse why not to do anything or not to get involved in our church, I will leave it to someone else. *The greatest among you must be your servant, anyone who exults themselves will be humbled*. People in our church were made to feel so bad about themselves that no one was ever good enough.

Many people talk of building community. There are many workshops on the subject; our governments, our councils, our Churches; we all talk of it constantly. **The way to build community is to live it:** to make it a part of all our lives. It happens when people do not come here as individuals but gather as part of a community. Who do not frown at someone who sits in their seat but smiles at them and says hello. Who does not want to remain anonymous so comes late or leaves early, **but perhaps says hello my name is...what is yours**.

When I have my own seat; my own place; my own section; we are comfortable; we sit in the same place and our view is the same each week, our habit becomes easy, and our seat becomes our place of honour! There are no reserved seats in this place, there are no reserved places of honour.

We miss out on seeing those around us. It is easy to say hello to those we know but not so easy to someone we do not know. Our individual comfort zones are stretched and we don't know what to do or how to react when confronted by a person we do not know. Sometimes to avoid this we come late and slip in the back or we leave early and slip out unnoticed so we do not have to engage.

Our gathering becomes about individuals; my own silent prayers; what I am comfortable with and not a community. Our world view narrows and we don't see the person we do not know: that other person. Mass is on at the same time every week, surely, we can come and do it true justice with our time. Do we fit our faith into this neat box for one hour – in this neat seat that we have – and then go back to our real life outside.

You know that person who sits in that row third from the end – and who sings out of tune – and who was away for a while – I found out today when I spoke to his wife that he is in hospital seriously ill – they live over the laneway – I saw her at Woollies today – we are practically neighbours. They are not anonymous anymore and neither are you – during the week you see them again in the shops and simply say *hello, is everything ok*. Next week when they come again you ask how her husband is – the story is shared – community is lived and built upon – with your own lives. It's not a workshop or about where we sit – this is simply living our faith – building our community – not anonymous faces in the crowd – strangers to each other.

What is celebrated here is a faith community coming together around the table of the Lord, what we call Eucharist because we are a Eucharistic community. This is our faith, this is about groups of people, not MY Eucharist. This is not MY Mass, not my place of honour, but a way of life, living our faith so that we gather together with each other. Amen.

Fr Matthew Moloney