

TO BELITTLE

The snide remark; the joke at someone's expense; the false laughter.

The rolling of the eyes, as two or three put another person down.

The list continues, as people display cruelty to others in so-called superior and condescending ways.

The stereotype label.

The ways we have in our culture to belittle someone.

Thinking we are superior to others, while all the time we show our meanness and cruelty.

And it can be at home, at work, at school, at a party, in sports, in church, or hobby or interests, and in the media we watch.

Then comes the lie.

Someone else notices what we have done, and challenges us.

Out comes our standard responses – such as,

"I didn't mean anything by it".

"You must have misunderstood me".

"Get a life".

It is amazing the ways **we belittle our own dignity by trying to belittle others.**

And the **state of denial** we are in – we think we are funny.

We confuse our small-mindedness with genuine humour.

WHY DO WE THINK THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR BECAUSE WE HAVE A MORE EXPENSIVE CAR OR CLOTHES OR HOUSE OR HIGHER PAYING SALARY OR WAGE?

WHY DO WE THINK THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF OUR SCHOOLING, OR LANGUAGE SKILL, OR COUNTRY OF BIRTH OR SUBURB WHERE WE LIVE?

WHY DO WE THINK THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF OUR I.T. SKILLS OR MOBILE APPS OR SOCIAL MEDIA GADGETRY?

WHY DO WE THINK THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR BECAUSE WE ARE SOCIALLY CONNECTED OR "KNOW" SOMEONE?

WHAT ARE FAVOURITE PUTDOWNS IN AUSTRALIA?

HOW MANY TIMES AT SOME PARTIES DO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OR PEOPLE'S ACCENTS BECOME OBJECTS OF RIDICULE?

HOW DO WE BECOME SO INSECURE IN OURSELVES THAT WE "MAKE BELIEVE" THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR TO SOMEONE OR SOME GROUP?

WHAT TYPE OF DENIAL IS IT?

TODAY'S GOSPEL – MATTHEW 20:1-16

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL, WE CHALLENGE OURSELVES – ARE WE TRULY MERCIFUL?

God is not only JUST but also MERCIFUL.

OTHERWISE WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE OF SALVATION?

The parable sets the scene.

The employer makes an agreement with workers.

A day's work for a day's wage. [JUSTICE](#).

But the employer goes out to the marketplace and finds workers unemployed and hires them too.

He does this several times.

He makes the effort to go and seek workers.

He has them paid, beginning with the latest. –

one denarius as per agreement. [MERCY INCLUDES GENEROSITY](#)

The original workers now expect more than one denarius.

They grumble.

They are “envious” – the Greek word is the “eye” desiring.

WHAT POINT IS THE “ENVOUS” ONES MISSING?

They know that they all go to the marketplace so that employers can find them.

There is no unemployment system, no safety net, no pension.

If you don't get work that day, you and your family go hungry.

Yet the first workers grumble instead of rejoicing.

LAST FIRST AND THE FIRST LAST

The First workers become the Last.

They have lost the ability to rejoice in mercy to others.

They are Last because they think they are special, more deserving, better because they worked longer.

We need to strive for Justice in our world.

But if we only seek justice, we miss out on the gifts of mercy.

Jesus stresses in today's Gospel the mercy of God.

God knows the circumstances we all face.

God knows the inequalities, the corruptions in our modern economy, the plight of the marginalised.

God knows that we can do better, that we can be more just.

But we also need to be more merciful.

We are created in God's image and likeness.

We are created to be JUST and MERCIFUL and LOVING.

Why?

Because **God is JUST and MERCIFUL and LOVING.**

When we are not just, merciful and loving, we dehumanise ourselves.

When we belittle others, we dehumanise ourselves.

When we think that we are superior, we dehumanise ourselves.

TODAY'S ECONOMY

1. *“Who are the ones excluded by the economy in today's world? What is their experience and what do we need to do to ensure the economy works for every person and for society as a whole?”*

2. *“Consider the key areas of economic exclusion in your neighbourhood. It may be issues like homelessness, environmental degradation, youth unemployment or cuts to Sunday penalty rates.”*
3. *“Work with others in your parish and local community to research the issue and to raise local awareness, including with other groups who hold similar concerns.”*

These three quotes are challenges from the Australian Social Justice Sunday Statement today, reminding us that this reform is *“everyone’s business”*.

The statement is titled -

“EVERYONE’S BUSINESS – DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY”.

For decades now, the last weekend of September has been Social Justice Sunday in Australia.

LET US RECALL SOME OF OUR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES:

1. *People and nature are not mere tools of production*
2. *Economic growth alone cannot ensure inclusive and sustainable development.*
3. *Social equity must be built into the heart of the economy*
4. *Businesses must benefit all society, not just shareholders*
5. *The excluded and vulnerable must be included in decision-making*

As seekers of Justice, we act justly.

As seekers of mercy, we are merciful,

As seekers of true love, agape, we promote dignity, we don’t belittle.

Loved by God, we rejoice in others, we want to be inclusive,

We don’t belittle or discriminate against or dominate others.

Loved by God, we want to act justly, love mercifully and be humble.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Justice and Mercy Together – 24 September]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/092417.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook24092017>]



Image: 'Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard' | Codex Aureus Epternacensis | illuminated Gospels | 7th or 8th c. Northumbrian origin