

Tax collectors and prostitutes are making are entering the kingdom before you. (Matthew 21: 28-32)

The trouble with the Pharisees was that they were basically selfish, and on the quiet they actually enjoyed the fact that there were tax collectors and prostitutes, because they made the Pharisees feel whiter than white. The Pharisees weren't bad people, it's just they were nit picking religious people, who, where their religion and their faith was concerned, dotted every "I" and crossed every "T". But would they lift a finger to help a person in need? No, not they. Their religion was all outward show, loud prayers, praying noisily and openly for all to see on street corners. If there was one thing which Jesus abhorred it was outward show.

So what can we take from this? Well I suppose today maybe we need to examine our attitude to our treasured Christian faith and ask ourselves the question; do I really live my faith each and every day or has it all become just a formality? If the answer to that question is yes, then let God's loving impulse touch you this morning. The Mass is our filling up station for the rest of the week. It's where we are filled up with God's grace and love in Scripture, prayer and Holy Communion. During the week let that love show to everyone we meet. Because if you were to come to church this morning, and after Mass finishes you were to start running down someone else from church or your neighbour, then that would be a sin and would wound God's heart of love. God requires strong level headed, practical Christians who live out their faith. God does not require Pharisees who make a spectacle of their faith and neglect the more important things like caring for our neighbour, and caring for the poor, the vulnerable and downtrodden.

I'll finish with a story. Everyday at midday Jim used to go into his local church. The Verger noticed this and alerted the Vicar, who challenged Jim, after all the church contained valuables. I go in there to pray, said Jim to the Vicar. I can't say long complicated prayers, but every day at 12 Noon I like to go into church, and I say, "Jesus, it's Jim." I wait a few moments, and then I come out again.

Now Jim became ill and was taken to hospital where he had a wonderful effect on the ward. He brought laughter, everyone was happy and the ward radiated love. "They say this is all your doing Jim", said the ward

sister one day, "You've made the ward a happy place." "Well" said Jim "I can't help but be happy, you see it's my visitor." "Your visitor" said the sister. She had noticed that Jim never received any visitors since he had no family. "Yes my visitor" said Jim smiling from ear to ear. " It's him who makes me happy. Everyday at 12 he comes to me and he smiles at me and says "Jim it's Jesus." It's him who makes me happy!

Today's lesson comes straight from the heart of God I believe, and reveals to us that the God we worship wants spiritual fruits, not religious nuts!