

Blame ... B-L-A-M-E ... is a sticky thing.

Social scientists have found that blame is contagious. When someone is blamed in a work environment, others begin to look for scapegoats to blame as well. The assumption is that this is a sort of “ego defense system” hard-wired into the psyche.

Those who shift blame onto others all the time may be showing signs of immaturity, narcissism, or severe depression ... while those who bear the brunt of undeserved blame may become chronically depressed.

The antidote for blame is to maintain a strong self-image. Workplace managers are told to encourage risk-taking and boldness to counteract a culture of blame.

There's even a new term coined to describe the effects of a rising culture of blame in organizations called blame-storming ... where an office becomes deadlocked due to people looking to deny responsibility, and and blame someone else. Such places become rapidly dysfunctional and are lucky to exist for any length of time.

Today is the 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time ... and in the First Reading, we hear from the Prophet Ezekiel. In this passage, the LORD is refuting the Israelites for blaming God for their problems. In the passages leading up to what we just heard read - the people of Israel are being called by God, through the prophet - to live lives of personal responsibility.

First they are told to stop blaming their ancestors, then they are told to stop blaming their parents, and in this passage they are told to stop blaming God.

Instead, they are called out to repent of their iniquities - their sins and misdeeds - and to step up, and accept responsibility for their actions.

In the Psalm, interspersed among calls for God's mercy are several requests to God to form us in His ways ... as well admonitions for us to grow in humility ... and allow Him to truly form us as His people.

St. Paul, too speaks about humility in the Letter to the Philippians ... admonishing those who hear him to “[d]o nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory” but rather to unite their minds with the Mind of Christ.

The passage we heard from St. Paul today, in its longer form, repeats part of what we heard two weeks ago on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In truly imitating Christ’s example ... and by relying more and more on God’s grace in our lives ... no matter what happens to us, we will be able to obtain the gifts of grace that St. Paul speaks about - namely: “*encouragement ... solace ... compassion ... mercy ... joy ... [and] love.*”

Andrew Murray, a 19th century Christian missionary, teacher, and pastor who lived in South Africa wrote extensively on humility, saying that:

*True humility comes when, in the light of God, we have seen ourselves to be nothing, have consented to part with and cast away self, to let God be all.*

In today’s Gospel, Jesus presents a parable which asks the ‘trick question’ about which matters most - (1) What you say, or (2) What you do?

In Our Lord’s time, and in our own time there is the temptation to put on a good face but be living a lie. There is also - then and now - the temptation to exert one’s own individuality by refusing to do one’s duty and shirking personal responsibility.

The key to understanding the parable isn’t which one of these is *more* wrong ... but rather what is the way out of both of these traps. That being to repent, take responsibility, and do the right thing.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for a true spirit of humility - after the example of Christ Jesus. May we know who we are “*in the light of God*” and throw away our own selfishness to allow God to be all-in-all ... let Him be everything ... in our hearts, our minds, and our lives.