

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Reform Oneself Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, June 22, 2015 8:15 AM
Gn 12:1-9; **Mt 7:1-5** (St. Paulinus of Nola, bishop; Sts. John Fisher, martyr and Thomas More, martyr) (We need the faith to move the mountains in ourselves.)

“Stop judging, that you may not be judged.”

This is addressed to the disciples; it is the actual meat of his moral teaching. It is about moral reform, but with oneself, not reforming society, not reforming the Church, not reforming the synagogue, not reforming the Temple, not reforming the world, but reforming oneself. And insofar as any Christians have ever forgotten this, they have missed the **fundamental target of Jesus’ moral teaching, which is the reform of oneself** and, therefore, the work of the gospel is work on oneself. It is not only on oneself, but primarily; and then **through working on oneself one starts to work also with others**. That’s where you get a community, but **a community doesn’t mean anything unless each person is already committed to work on oneself**. And then if the community is really committed, each person in his or her own way working on himself and working with each other, **then they can make an impact on the world**.

The impact is one of **an extraordinary example**, which according to Christ, is very powerful—**both for better or for worse**. **Scandal** is very powerful and very evil, and it would be better for a person to be thrown into the sea with a weight around his neck than to cause bad example. On the other hand, **good example** is a powerful leaven in society.

What undermines all this? Hypocrisy, **hypocrisy is basically a split between the outer and the inner life**, where ordinarily undue emphasis is put on the outer life, on appearances, on what seems to be so, what other people observe to be so, whereas inwardly the qualities of the heart and mind are unchanged. They remain self-centered, petty, small, easily irritated, touchy, prideful, envious, resentful, indifferent to what is really good, and on and on and on

through all the various capital faults and sins. And that's what he is talking about. **We need to look at ourselves and find what is wrong**, what is small, what is not godly, what is not divine, what is not brimming over with grace. We have to find that. That's an obstacle. It has to be removed.

Now some people say, oh, well, we cannot **change human nature**. Oh, yes, we can; **God's grace can. But we have to have faith**. That's why he says, "If you say to this mountain, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' it will be done." That's the kind of faith we need, **the faith to move the mountains in ourselves** so the way of the Lord is straight and plain and level. And historically we know **the disciples have not spent enough time doing this, for which reason the witness to the gospel is compromised**. The world looks at the disciples and they say, oh, well, they are nothing. They are just like everybody else. And Christ's teaching goes unheeded.