

Withhold Judgment Fifth Week of Lent Monday, March 14, 2016 8:15 AM
Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Jn 8:12-20 (Wait until the final day and the final hour
when everything will be revealed.)

“Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world.’”

Today’s two readings are about judgment. **Judgment is a decision made by the mind about what is true or false, what is right or wrong.** It is not necessarily black or white; there are all kinds of gradations of truth, and there are all kinds of levels of evidence that affect the quality of certainty that can adhere to a judgment. One can be really certain or somewhat certain or somewhat sure or not sure at all, and so on. That’s all part of judgment.

Jesus accused the Pharisees of judging by appearances, in other words, **deducing from evidence gathered from the senses.** And he is **contrasting that to knowing in a very personal sense.** “I know where I come from and I know where I am going. You know neither where I come from nor where I am going. You do not know me and you do not know the Father.” These are very personal ways of knowing, not about facts. It’s not about deductions from experience. It’s personal. It’s direct. Jesus is contrasting a direct knowledge of God, a direct experience of God, an immediate experience of God with simply trying to figure out what’s what, using reason and logic. **They are two different ways of knowing.**

Now one of the interesting things he says is, **“I do not judge.”** That’s very interesting. But he said, “If I did, it would be correct.” In other words, **he does see into the heart and soul of every matter, of every issue, of every person.** And yet he withholds any kind of judgment: good, bad, indifferent. He withholds it. Why? Because he knows that **what he is looking at is not a finished product.** We are not finished products. We are all on a journey, and how it will all turn out we don’t yet know and cannot. And so **we need to withhold judgment of ourselves and others,** because even if we had a direct access to their souls and minds and understood

exactly what they understand and perceived exactly what they are choosing, what we would perceive would be only in the present moment. It's not what they would be tomorrow or a week from now or a year from now or at the hour of their death. In this way even if we could judge and judge rightly, we should not; we should withhold judgment, **wait until the final day and the final hour when everything will be revealed.**

And the judgment will not be based on hearsay as in the story of Susanna where people simply believe because some elder said something—pretty poor, not a very good reflection on their character actually. **On the last day everything will be obvious:** the good, the bad, the indifferent. And it will be finished; it will be complete. And we will arrive at the omega, the final destination for the creation. **But until then, everything is moving, everything is changing.** And in that movement and change **we have great opportunities to let go of every kind of error and mistake and bad choice, and move onward to something better,** more true, more faithful. And as long as we are moving, we always need to have hope. **The mercy of God is infinite and, therefore, we have every right to hope for the best possible outcome for everyone.**