

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 17th 2024

Scandalizes

During the Jubilee year of mercy, Pope Francis launched a book with the title ‘The Name of God is Mercy’. The book was a result of an interview with Pope Francis by an Italian journalist. In the interview, the Pope talked about the logic of God which is nothing but a logic of love that scandalises the pharisees and the teachers of the Law.

God’s logic of love is reflected in everything that Jesus says and does. Jesus reveals a God who doesn’t wait for us to be perfect or blameless before engaging with us. Jesus engaged with people as they were, in all their frailty and weakness. That is how the Lord engages with each one of us.

Jesus scandalizes the doctors of the Law, the scribes of the Pharisees, by sharing table with people who were considered sinners by the society. Sharing the table or having a meal together meant, accepting one another as belonging to the family or friends. We share the meal with people who are close to us – our family or friends. In sharing table with tax collectors and sinners Jesus was showing that God wants to be in communion with us just as we are. It is that experience of God’s loving communion with us that will empower us to become the person God wants me to be and to live the life God calls me to live.

In this season of Lent, the Church offers the call of Levi as an invitation for us to look into our lives to see how merciful and empathetic are we in our life in the Church community, in the society and in our families. Do we look at our brothers or sisters and label them as outcasts and sinners and reject them from our circles? The Lenten fasting calls on us to fast from spreading rumours that label people as bad, fast from gossiping and instead nurture the virtue of empathy mercy and love. Remember, the people who regarded themselves as the insiders - chosen people of God – the Pharisees and teachers of the Law – had become the outsiders; while the so called outcasts – the sinners and tax collectors – became the insiders who had the privilege to dine with Jesus. On which side are you?

Bible Claret