



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-February 27th 2022

***Readings: Ecclesiasticus 27: 4-7, Psalm 91, 1 Corinthians 15: 54-58,
Luke 6: 39-45***

Fourteen years ago, when we were busily transforming the old family home into Fowey Retreat, we contacted the firm that had supplied our kitchen in Lostwithiel. They were a characterful outfit trading out of a farmyard in the rural outskirts of Preston. We had spent a happy day there choosing our cupboards and marvelling at the low prices for the real wood. As we toured the little showroom with Malcolm, we could see and hear the whirr of the circular saw and see the sawdust flying out of the adjacent barn door. You would have to wear goggles there to avoid getting the flying dust in your eyes. I recall randomly thinking about Jesus in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth and, pace a much slower saw, whether today's image of the mote in the eye came from hard experience. He must have seen a lot of motes and prepared quite a few beams.

So His point in this morning's story is pretty direct. If we seek to lead each other in the Way, we have to be clear sighted. We need to have no impediments to our vision. If we do then we are simply the blind leading the blind – Destination –the Ditch.

Of course we all know what is wrong with other people, their stupidities, their shortsightedness, their follies and their sins. If anyone says, 'I don't

know what's wrong with me', I can say smartly, - 'Would you like a list?' But Jesus reminds us that first we have to deal with the plank in our own eye. This is a piece of glorious hyperbole. We can all resonate to the dust mote that closes our eyes. But The PLANK? That is ridiculous. Except of course that it isn't. It is the situation where people, perhaps even us, have developed a way of life which is so conformed to tolerating our peculiar blindnesses that we have transformed a ridiculous plank into a highly polished and deeply revered piece of personal furniture. Everything is constructed around accommodating that absurdity. It becomes part of who we are. It blinds us to reality but we are not going to let go of it in a hurry. We are secretly very proud of it. There goes old Rob with his beautiful plank.

Apart from the absurdity of our personal situation vis a vis optical impediments, we then have the temerity to offer to perform the delicate task of removing a mote from our brother's eye, as if the plank were a veritable qualification.

The simple fact is that we can't be of use to our fellow blind if we have not had the operation to restore our own vision. An impenitent soul cannot guide a fellow sinner. More alarmingly, an impenitent church cannot plausibly call the world to repentance – which is, after all, the primary pre-evangelism task of the Gospel Mission of the Church.

A rider: Malcolm and his sawdust shed did not make the same Gothic arch style cupboards any more when we went back but.....they did make a style called 'old farmhouse'. It looked fine in the brochure and we duly ordered for Fowey's kitchen. To our horror, when the cupboards arrived they were riddled with woodworm. All but one of the central panels had been victims of an infestation. I phoned Malcolm demanding that he take them back. He would not.

Outrageous.

When I had finally climbed down off the ceiling Malcolm explained to me that the ‘woodworm holes’ were not woodworm at all. They were painstakingly tapped into the panels by his craftsmen to look like woodworm – which you might expect in an old farmhouse kitchen. What looked to me like a faulty product was, in fact, the very hallmark of authenticity. These designer show homes for ‘boring beetles’, which were never occupied, appealed to my sense of humour. We kept the cupboards. It seemed to me that there was a sermon in there somewhere and that, as a metaphor for the human condition, ‘faultiness’ is truly a hallmark of authenticity and that, given time, Malcolm’s mythical woodworm might be just the remedy for my ‘plank’.