

Homily based on the readings from June 22, 2026 (2 Kings 17.5-8, 13-15a, 18; Matthew 7.1-5)

*Stop judging, that you may not be judged* – or, in somewhat more familiar language, *judge not, lest ye be judged*. While this message fundamentally affects the life of every single Christian, it has probably been *misinterpreted* more than any other line of Holy Scripture.

Whenever we encounter this passage, it is *essential* that we be absolutely clear – both about what Christ is saying, and also about what he is *not*.

What Jesus is telling us here is that we must never attempt to judge *human beings*. At a basic level, it is not our place to determine – or even to speculate about – whether somebody else is righteous or unrighteous, whether he or she is *destined* for heaven or for hell. That judgment is left entirely to God himself, based on interactions and observations that are *totally* invisible to the rest of us. In view of this principle, the Church absolutely *never* states that any specific individual is in hell – no matter how vicious or destructive his actions may have been – and

*almost* never asserts that a particular person is in heaven. The only exception, of course, is the *tiny* number of people who have been officially beatified or canonized – declared *blesseds* or *saints* – like John Fisher and Thomas More, whose memorial we celebrate today. In that case, after *years* of meticulous study and deliberation, the Church officially proclaims that a person – of *exceptional* virtue and piety – has, in fact, been welcomed into heaven. For the sake of context, only about two dozen people who have ever lived in what is now the United States have received either of these designations. That does *not* mean that millions of *other* American Catholics from previous generations are *not* in heaven – just that this information is *inherently* beyond the scope of our mortal knowledge.

On a more personal level, it would be *completely* unacceptable for any of us ever to come up to somebody and say: “you are definitely going to hell” – or *even*: “you are definitely going to *heaven*,” as *welcome* as that opinion might be. That is *exactly* what Christ is telling us *not* to do: “[s]top judging, that you may not be judged.”

On the other hand, many people in today's society have distorted this directive into something that is *completely* unrecognizable. When they hear the word *judge*, they apply it not to *people* but to *actions*.

According to this interpretation, Christians are not allowed to criticize *any* sort of behavior or belief – whether it relates to personal conduct, collective morality, or even religious observance. I am sure we all know people who think it is unacceptable to denounce abortion, or affirm the authentic definition of marriage, or even uphold the universal truth of Christianity. Such a position is not only contrary to the plain teaching of the Gospel, but it is actually a form of *cruelty*. Remember that *instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, and admonishing sinners* are all examples of spiritual works of mercy. Withholding God's eternal truth from somebody who *desperately* needs to hear it is *totally* inconsistent with our obligations as Christians.

The balance we have to find here is what Saint Paul describes as “speaking the truth in love.” We need to remember that our mission is

not win *arguments*, but to save *souls*. Nevertheless, if we are not willing to proclaim the *truth*, then we are no better than the *salt* that has lost its savor, the *light* that is hidden under a bushel, or the *man* who has buried his talent in the ground. Christianity is a priceless gift, and we must never be so *selfish* as to conceal it from other people. We simply need to remember that there is no place in God's kingdom for *self*-righteousness – but only for the perfect and eternal righteousness for which Christ himself is our one true model.