

This weekend we are celebrating the rite of sending for our OCIA candidates who will be presented to Archbishop Sample next Saturday in Medford. Today's gospel has a nice tie-in to this celebration and also to all of our lives. Hopefully, whenever we are trying to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and holiness we seek out leaders who actually know where they are going and how to get there. We have good catechists here, so I am confident that our catechumens and candidates are well prepared to fully enter into the Church at Easter. Can the rest of us say the same about our own lives? Who do we turn to for help? Do we seek out wise and holy people who know what they are talking about or do we follow the latest social media influencers regardless of their credentials?

Jesus' reference to the splinter and the log can be understood in different ways. The splinter in the other's eye can be something which we think is a fault in the other person and are determined to correct but we do so in complete blindness to our own faults. Jesus is encouraging us to know ourselves before we try to "fix" others, who might not even need fixing. When we acknowledge our own wounds and issues and challenges and ask for God's help to do the work necessary to heal from them, that is when we can truly help others. Our experiences with certain struggles can be wisely used to help others avoid or get out of the same pits.

Being unaware of the log in our own eye represents ignorance of our own imperfections and sinfulness and our own need for healing. It can also represent a more general ignorance, for example when we criticize and sit in judgment over others or over situations without knowing the full circumstances. We are often very critical of situations and people without full knowledge of what is going on behind the scenes. We make assumptions and jump to conclusions and then share those conclusions with others, even if they have no basis in truth or fact. That is known as gossip and rumor-mongering and can lead to scandal. When we don't know the full story, it is better to ask for information from the appropriate authorities before we start speculating and making assumptions. Once we start spreading rumors, we cannot get those words back and we can do a great deal of damage to innocent people and make bad situations worse. This applies to our speech and our social media accounts. Until we know the full story, it is best to keep our physical and digital mouths shut.

Lent begins on Wednesday. It would be a good idea to use today's gospel and other recent gospels as the basis for an honest examination of conscience.

What is Jesus trying to say to us through them? How is he calling us to acknowledge our wounds and our sins and ask him to forgive and heal us?