

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 14th 2017**

He came wearing steel-toed boots, a thick plaid shirt and dirt-stained pants. His calloused hands and weatherworn face contrasted with his downcast eyes and the sense of profound sadness I felt emanating from him. I wondered what lay behind his rough and tough exterior as he began, “Bless me Father, for I have sinned...” He rattled off his sins, but his heart remained heavy.

The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

The Spirit nudged me as I asked, “And for what else do you seek God’s mercy?”

No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

His hard façade fell. The tears welled up as he bared the rest of his soul to the Lord. After receiving absolution, he left with a light heart, full of God’s mercy and healing.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

We spend so much time and energy masking our own weaknesses and concealing our sinfulness. We try to appear strong and tough to others. Yet we know that God sees through our masks and façades. Jesus penetrated the rough and tough exteriors of Levi, the tax collectors and other sinners when he dined with them. He did so not to chastise or condemn them, but to bring them to the love and grace of God. Perhaps we can spend less time maintaining our own façades once we realize that Jesus came to call the sinners.

John Shea, S.J. - Creighton University's Biology Department