



**SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**May 5, 2024**

*St. James Catholic Church*  
*3909 Harrison \* Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

*Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier*

Stephen Batchelor writes:

"[the] self is afflicted with a gnawing doubt that something essential to it is lacking. I appear to be self-sufficient, but crave to be loved and recognized by others; I project self-assurance, but feel as though I'm wearing a mask; I present a cheerful exterior, but inwardly suffer a quiet desperation; I affirm my singularity but suspect that I am a jumbled collection of roles." (from *Living With the Devil*)

Batchelor names some thoughts and feelings that are pretty much universal among us human beings. Recognizing we are a "jumbled collection" of stuff on the inside often results in a critical view of ourselves. We often start thinking "There's something wrong with me." This drives us to further hide what's "wrong" with us from others, as we put on more and more facades and false fronts. It may cause us chronic stress as we try to be perfect, or it may cause us to give up trying anything at all. It can lead to all kinds of broken relationships. And since we see ourselves as flawed, we automatically assume others are flawed too. We then tend not to trust others. Worse yet, we can be very judgmental of others, which we use to distract ourselves from our self-critical inner voice that continuously tortures us.

An alternative is, first of all, to be compassionate with ourselves. Having the gamut of good, bad, and ugly stuff in us is unavoidable. It is reality. It is human. We will never be perfect. To deny reality is a sure-fire way to drive ourselves nuts. But having compassion for one's imperfect self enables us to stop wasting our energy on self-incrimination and self-loathing. We can then use that energy to increase our ability to do good, which pretty much automatically limits the effects of our faults, failures, and imperfections.

Being compassionate with ourselves makes it much easier to be compassionate with others. We can then recognize that the inner struggles of others are the same as ours. Our judgmentalism then tends to disappear, and we may even be drawn to helping others in their struggles by sharing what successes we've had in this regard.

Jesus knew well that people had good, bad, and ugly stuff in them. The ugly stuff was what led to his crucifixion. But for him there was only one message to preach, and only one thing to do -- love your neighbor as yourself. Or in other words, be compassionate with yourself and you'll be compassionate with others.