

Who is in communion with whom here? Or, just as well, perhaps, who, or what, is the source of our unity? First a quote from Alexander Solzhenitsyn from the second volume of the *Gulag Archipelago*, that series of prison camps where the Soviet Union sought to deal with difference by removing it from sight.

Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good from evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us it oscillates with the years. And even with hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains an unuprooted small corner of evil. (Chapter 4)

This is Solzhenitsyn democratising the problem of difference, as Jesus does in today's gospel. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees lies in their failure to realise that the line between good and evil passes through their own hearts too. This failure means that they dare not risk communion with the more obvious sinners as it will highlight their own sinfulness – the mirror imaging that we all risk in being with one another; that mirror that spurs us either to compassion or to condemnation and is the litmus test to where we are with God or, just as well, where God is with us. For, if God is with us, and this is the whole meaning of the incarnation – the bit missing from today's gospel passage – then we cannot but see every other human being, and indeed, all creation, as part of the one body, the one creation of God and be willing then to sit at table with anyone. Jesus, after all, also ate with Pharisees. And indeed becomes our bread, the source of our unity.

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