



PONTIFICIA
UNIVERSITÀ
GREGORIANA

Istituto di Antropologia



Retreat 10 – 12.12.2025

Meditation on Matthew 11:16-19

It is a profound experience that many of us have likely had at some point. It is wonderful to be together with other people, to talk to each other, to laugh together, to celebrate, and to mourn and share pain together, among many other things. And yet there are sometimes moments when you start to doubt your fellow human beings, and it becomes difficult to put up with each other. You can get annoyed with others just as easily as you were happy with them before. Mutual lack of understanding, limited patience, and different temperaments are just some of the examples that illustrate how quickly anger and arguments can arise.

In today's Gospel, Jesus talks about two situations that make it hard for people to get along. First, he uses the image of children sitting in the marketplace, playing the flute or singing a dirge, to describe those who expect you to do exactly what they want. If you don't, you'll be rejected. On the other hand, when it comes to himself and John the Baptist, he mentions people who accuse the latter of being possessed by a demon and him of being a glutton and a drunkard. These people aren't interested in seeing a fair picture or thinking about the other person; they just want to lift themselves up by criticising others, whether it's fair or not.

How do we deal with such people? This question also arises for all those who want to get involved in safeguarding. Here, too, there are people who don't want to form a differentiated judgment or expect you to do everything exactly as they imagine and who then reject you or even fight you if things turn out differently. For some, you are a traitor because you side with the victims, for others, you are one of the cover-ups because you do not ignore the complexity of dealing with cases of abuse and do not condemn everything and everyone who belongs to the church. As a safeguarder, you are sometimes expected to immediately find a solution to a problem out of nowhere, as it were, which can put the church under pressure. At the same time, you are also expected not to emphasise the issue of abuse too much and to keep quiet when the situation seems to be easier for the church at that moment.

In today's Gospel, Jesus points to a solution that should not be forgotten in such situations. He says: "Yet wisdom has been proved right by her deeds" (Matthew 11:19). He points out that wisdom, which here stands for God's work and therefore God himself, will prevail in the end. It does not do this because it wants to please everyone or because it allows itself to be determined by others. She asserts herself through her actions in a self-determined way. Her actions speak for themselves and are ultimately recognised and respected.

The same likely applies to safeguarders. Ultimately, their actions determine whether their work produces lasting results and overcomes all resistance and conflicting expectations. Four key traits are particularly important: 1) Safeguarders' actions must be fair. They need to consider everyone involved and their responsibilities, taking these seriously. 2) Actions taken by safeguarders must be transparent. Measures that are not openly communicated will only foster resistance. 3) Their actions must be traceable, and safeguarders should be accountable. If they cannot explain or justify their actions, it leads to a sense of arbitrariness. 4) Safeguarders' actions must be rule-based. Believing they can disregard other relevant regulations due to their dedication and work can lead to new injustices and abuse of power, specifically, that of the safeguarders. As Jesus states, the current generation or some of its members may be like children calling out to others or like those who only see the faults in others. In any case, safeguarders should not fall into this trap.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You have said that You are the way, the truth and the life. Give us the necessary foresight to follow You on the right path and not allow ourselves to be led astray from it. Give us the necessary serenity and patience to be able to walk this path together with other people.

Question

How could someone from the outside recognise that my actions are credible and effective?

