

Fr Ben's Weekly Reflection

23rd Sunday Ordinary Time

Sep 6, 2026

What's Wrong With The World?

There is the classic fable of the "Emperor's New Clothes" in which an emperor gets tricked by hooligans. They tell him that they can weave a magic cloth that only the truly wise and trustworthy can see. Naturally, it's all a ploy to get money, but everyone is afraid to say they can't see anything. It's only when the emperor is parading around town in his "new clothes" that a child says, "the emperor isn't wearing any clothes!" Like that, the "spell" is broken and the emperor is embarrassed as people laugh.

There is a version of the emperor story I laid out where once the kid speaks up, the emperor continues in his parade as prideful as ever. He tells himself everyone in his kingdom are fools. If we were to create a "modern day 10 Commandments" I think "Thou shalt not judge" would be #1. Egos are very inflated today and often times any criticism or even suggestion is met with "How **dare** you judge me!" That's a common reason many people stay away from church: "Everyone there is so judgy and judgmental."

I've been talking about confession the past couple weeks because our sins are like those hooligans in the story. They are trying to convince us the reverse that our sins aren't **really** there and that we are really awesome amazing people! Everyone else has a problem, see. You are perfect and wonderful and awesome 1000% of the time. But deep down, we know the truth…and it scares us.

Scripture is like that child saying to us, "The emperor has no clothes." As St. Paul lays out for us once again, the commandments remind us "Hey, don't steal; don't covet; don't commit adultery; don't kill." Jesus says it too: "If your brother sins against you, **tell him**."

We are always making judgments. We **must** to survive. When you come to the four way intersection of Highway 1 and 22 in Kalona, you have to make a judgment on if the other guy is going or not. We can judge actions based off the commandments God has laid out for us. We cannot judge internal motives. That is for only God and the individual to know.

The British essayist G. K. Chesterton in a reply to a paper editorial asking "what is wrong with the world" replied by letter simply saying "I am." His point is that our world (and our Church) is made up 100% of sinners. To say or think otherwise is foolish. Confession is the means of being continually redeemed and "worked on" by God. However, confession takes great humility. It means tossing out the hooligans and listening to the child. We aren't that great on our own. We need God and others to correct and guide us to living like Christ as He intends us to live.