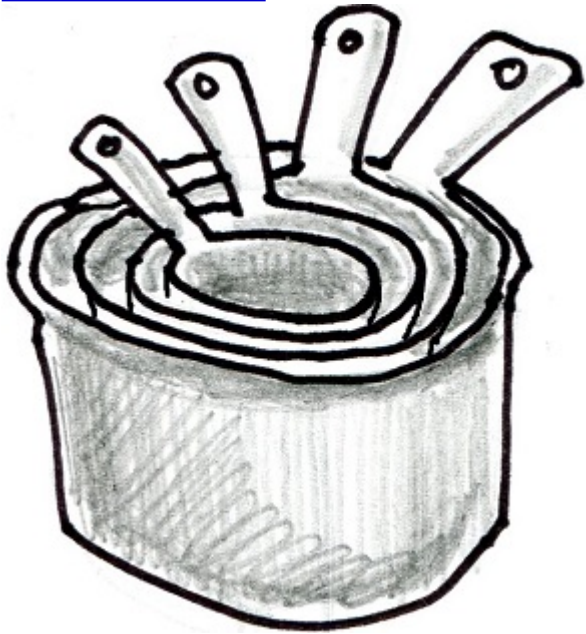


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by Pat Marrin

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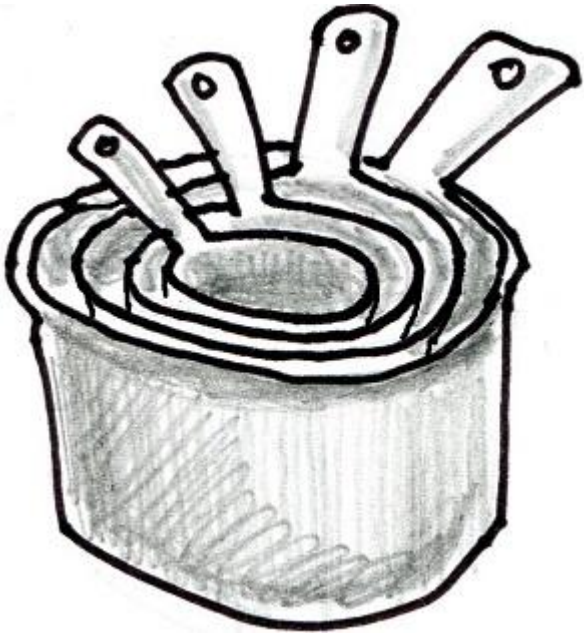
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January 27, 2021

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“The measure with which you measure shall be measured out to you” (Mark 4:24).

*Heb 10:19-25; Mark 4:21-25*

The saying about measures in today’s Gospel passage is a variation on the Golden Rule. It confirms that we will receive what we give out, reap what we sow, and it offers insights about the nature of the human heart. We choose the standard that will determine all our relationships and influence every exchange. Jesus taught love because it was wise and led to freedom, joy, and a more abundant life.

This wisdom has endless applications. A generous soul creates a whole world of open generosity that flows back and forth, inspiring others to act in kind. People who pay it forward put in motion cycles of blessings that often come back to them. A stingy heart invests little and is poorer for it. Big hearts grow, while small heartedness cultivates scarcity and a cautious *quid pro quo* approach with obsessive bookkeeping that leads to cynicism about other people’s motives. A selfish person sees everyone as selfish.

Jesus healed many blind and deaf people because this addressed the root of other incapacities. If we are blind and deaf, how hard it is to solve other problems. Spiritual blindness and deafness isolate people in willful ignorance. Disciples are to be the light of the world. Listening is the secret of wisdom and humility, the wellspring of prayer. Without it, we are like someone setting out on a journey without knowing where we are going.

St. Thomas Aquinas, whose feast we commemorate today, was brilliant because he saw the whole and the parts, could order his thinking with great clarity, see the organizing principle underlying a complex issue. He was known for great purity of heart, another way of saying he saw the truth for itself, unclouded by self-interest or prejudice, was free to follow logic to its conclusions whether it was the desired outcome or not.

Jesus spoke truth in a world designed to obscure and distort reality by those whose control relied on deceiving others, manipulating everything to hide their intentions, complicate the rules that shielded their power from accountability. No wonder Jesus set off alarms by exposing the nerves of complicity between the wealthy aristocracy, high priests, Herodians and Roman occupation eyeing the temple treasury and vying for control in Jerusalem. His simple, straightforward teaching cast light on the whole system and thrilled the crowds, who recognized that “Jesus spoke with authority, unlike their own scribes” (Mark 1:22).

We pray to see clearly, but then must be ready to face inconvenient truths, our own faults at play in family conflicts, our pride hiding in our slanted objectivity and weighted motives and sensitivities when events intrude on our comfort zones and personal plans. The truth sets everyone free, but it spoils the games people play or reopens old wounds for treatment with honest talk as the only path to peace. It takes courage to ask for this essential grace.

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