

## 10A

*Jesus seems to have had a soft spot for tax collectors. Remember how he stood by Zacchaeus when everyone else shunned him and today he enlists Matthew the tax collector as one of the 12. Tax collectors at the time of Jesus weren't the most popular of people because they were working for the Romans. And another thing, as we read in today's gospel, tax collectors and sinners were usually banded together and tarred with the same brush yet Jesus often shared meals with them much to the ire of the self-righteous Pharisees.*

But what a lot of these 'holier than thou' Pharisees failed to realise was that Jesus came to save sinners i.e. to take away their guilt and shame and give them a fresh start. Isn't that what everyone wants deep down – to turn over a new leaf and not be disturbed by people who keep reminding us of our mistakes? Remember when somebody points the finger at you they are pointing three at themselves. When God forgives our sins, figuratively speaking he dumps them into the deepest lake and has an enormous sign posted nearby which reads 'no fishing'

In the Creed we say: 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'. The question is: do we? How many people are burdened by sins of the past even though they have confessed them? Ask any psychologist and they will tell you there is good guilt and bad guilt. Good guilt is when my conscience warns me I've done wrong. I seek forgiveness and am set free and move on. Bad guilt is when I cannot forgive myself, even though Jesus forgives me. Every day I get up there something gnawing at my soul and I can't seem to shake it off.

The Good News is that bad guilt doesn't come from God. The Devil's delights in keeping me in a state of perpetual misery and sadness because of my sins. In the Book of Revelation we read: 'He', the Evil One, ' accuses us day and night before our God.' He never lets up.

When God forgives He suffers from total amnesia. *It reminds me of this man in rural Ireland who said he was having visions of Jesus and it was causing a great stir in the area. Eventually the local bishop asked to see the man privately to decide whether the visions were authentic or not. He said: 'the next time Jesus appears ask Him to tell you the sins the bishop. You have my full permission. When Jesus appeared again, the man asked him to reveal the bishops sins. Jesus's immediate answer was; 'I can't, I've forgotten them' That was all the bishop needed for authenticity.*

*It says in one of the psalms: 'When I remove your sins, I will never again call them to mind'. That's the kernel of the Gospel. That is the Good News.*