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I know last week that Pope Francis held out the hand of friendship to the Lutheran leaders. However, one of the views which Luther held at the time of the Reformation was that faith alone regardless of good works was all that was needed to assure our salvation. The Reforming Council of Trent maintained that this was a flawed interpretation of Scripture.

In the gospel today, St Matthew stresses a combination of the two when he says: "let the light of your faith shine out among people so that seeing your good works they may give praise to your Father in Heaven".

If our works of charity, are not inspired by faith in God then we could easily be performing them for our own praise not God's. But even when our good works are done away from the limelight, as it were, our faith will automatically shine out but we may be scarcely aware of it.

On the other hand if we say we have faith and our good deeds are few and far between, people might be entitled to question our Christian credentials. St James says that "faith without good works is dead". And at the Last Judgement we will be judged on good works not on lofty spiritual thoughts or pious aspirations.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta was once taken aback when she attended an international conference in Calcutta on world poverty. Pretty near the conference centre there were hordes of destitute people but the well-dressed delegates on their way to the venue didn't play a blind bit of notice to them. There can often be a big gulf between 'talking the talk' and 'walking the walk' when it comes to faith culminating in good deeds.

For instance, we know the Lord's asks us to be meek and humble of heart like Himself, but if people see that I always take exception to doing lowly and menial tasks or if I never

admit I'm wrong in anything, then how am I meek and humble of heart like our Lord?

Perhaps what Jesus is talking about in today's Gospel is letting the light of our good example shine out. What light of example, for instance, are you passing on to your children or grandchildren when it comes to your marriage? How are you living up to those married pledges which you made to each other before the altar of God on your wedding day? Being married in church, or being married at all, will at least put you on the right footing to carry out those promises and thereby pass on the light of your example to a wider audience. Marriage can be so trivialised today that it amounts to little more than a piece of paper.

But the message of the gospel is not to feel discouraged if sometimes there is a contradiction between our faith and practice. We can always work at it. There will always be some contradiction between faith and subsequent action this side of the grave. No one who is reasonably trying their best is written off by Our Lord. We write ourselves off when we let the light of our faith in Him go out and stop believing that 'without Him we can do nothing'.