My Humble Opinion

A thought for Lent 2024

We have MU member, Marjorie, to thank for this one!

We were talking about church issues when she said, "Well, in my humble opinion…." Then she broke off and laughed. "My husband used to say 'Marjorie, you never have a humble opinion!'" I joined in the laughter.

It occurred to me that one mark of a life-giving relationship is when one person can say something kindly critical of the other and the other can acknowledge the validity of the criticism and laugh. (And I do enjoy listening to Marjorie's humble opinions as she's always willing to listen to mine!)

How often we speak those words to introduce our argument!

'In my humble opinion….' is a frequently used preface to introduce the perspective of the speaker on the issue under consideration. Invariably it is a phrase we use in the company of like-minded people who will probably collude with our 'humble opinion' and make us feel a tad 'righteous' to have voiced it!

Sometimes we are bold enough to beg the listener's support: 'If you want my humble opinion…' The listener rarely has the courage to say 'No, I don't' (that would be discourteous) so we have our captive audience in situ. We rarely venture these introductory phrases to someone who clearly holds an opposite opinion. We rarely wish to listen to someone else's 'humble opinion' unless it confers with ours. Therein lies the danger. The sub-post-office workers were the innocent victims of many 'humble opinions' aired in their communities.

So here is a humble invitation. Let's bring our 'humble opinions' into church this Lententide and lay them at the altar of redemption, mindful that it was the crowd-swell of humble opinion which led Jesus to the cross. Let's ask for God's grace to see our humble opinions in perspective, to recognise we don't know the full story and to have the humility to laugh at ourselves before we become dangerously judgemental.

Matthew 7.3-5 has something to say on the subject – paraphrased as 'Sometimes you can't see the wood for the trees.'