

The Heron, the Gull and Morality.

We have a love/hate relationship with the heron that regularly visits our garden. He sits like a statue on our roof waiting until the coast is clear before he raids our ponds, one of which is now barricaded like a fortified castle. Our fury knew no bounds when we found a large golden orf flattened some twenty-five metres from the pond. The heron's eyes had been bigger than his ability to carry the fish. Our hearts soften when we see him clumsily take off climbing into graceful flight, his long legs trailing behind him or walking across our lawn with a propriety air. We think, what a beautiful bird.



Our thoughts are not so gracious when it comes to seagulls. This morning we saw two herons being mobbed by screeching, raucous herring gulls. Our sympathy was with the herons as the marauders forced them low to the ground outside our window. We saw an owl in similar difficulties. Seagulls are not one of our favourite birds. One of them swooped down and snatched an ice cream from the hand of a startled Sister.

Another large gull sat on the bonnet of our car, inches from the windscreen, greedily and balefully eyeing the lunch being eaten by two Sisters. They were glad that the glass separated them from the powerful bird. There is no morality in the world of the seagull!

Sometimes it seems in our world morality is in short supply. Two of us can remember when the so-called "new morality" was given scholarly credence by some theologians. We listened in astonishment to a superintendent minister, in whose circuit we were working, explaining that prostitutes were working out of love for their clients. Our hearts go out to these women, most of whom are victims themselves, but we would hardly call their work altruistic. Society and some sections of the church were on a slippery slope.

As fresh revelations surface in the banking sector there can be little doubt that much of it has been caused by the lack of a moral framework. The prophet Hosea said, "They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind", (Hosea 8:17). We are quite proficient sometimes at commenting on the state of our country but what about ourselves? Truth, integrity, and honesty – these qualities matter. They can all be summed up in the commandment to love our neighbour but sometimes this needs to be spelt out. So, at the beginning of this new year, let us examine our lives before the Lord. Is our Christian, Bible-based moral framework intact, or in one area or another, is it in danger of collapse?