

Twenty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Deut. 4. 1-2, 6-8, James 1.17-18, 21-22,27, Mk. 7. 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Today Jesus corrects the Pharisees and scribes again! The Pharisees are complaining that Jesus and His Disciples ate their meals without washing, purifying, or proper preparation. The following words from Jesus summarize the teachings for today, “Nothing that enters from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.” The Church however wants us to see or understand a little about where the Pharisees are coming from.

In Moses great speech which is revealed in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses is sharing with the people of Israel the laws and statues of God. Moses tells the people we must be obedient to the commandments of God. This is a written record of what obedience is. What we refer to as sin. Notice that Moses specifically says do NOT add nor subtract from the command. Simply put, by following the law, Israel will enjoy the assurance of a close relationship with the Lord. The Israelites and all of us realize the we are not perfect and that it is difficult to keep the law all the time.

It is in keeping with the Old Testament laws to which was expanded by the Pharisees that they again press Jesus thinking they have caught Him doing wrong. The Pharisees hang up is that Jesus and His disciples did not wash/purify themselves as they refer to this as their “tradition of the elders.” The Pharisees believe that if they are not purified they put sin inside them.

A prophet is someone who reveals what God has directed them to. The prophets were all killed in vicious ways. Jesus turns to the Prophet Isaiah to try and explain what the Pharisees and others relationship with God looks like. The Pharisees “honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away.” Even today many people give praiseworthy words to Jesus, to God, but their actions / their hearts indicate otherwise.

Jesus takes His teaching one step further as He preaches not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Jesus specifically says, “Nothing that enters one from the outside can defile that person.” To defile means to make someone unclean. Its not our food we eat but rather Jesus says, “the things that come out from within are what defile.” It is our words, our actions which come from the heart, the mind that lead us to violate the commandments, to sin.

By our uncharitable actions we show to one another is what leads us to sin which is from the inside. Our relationship with each other also affects our

relationship with God. Our actions and, yes, even our inactions can separate us from a strong healthy relationship with God. When choose not to serve or help the poor. When we choose not to serve and strengthen our family by our lives, by our witness to Christ we offend and separate ourselves from God. I can't help but think of Mt.12.36-37 where Jesus says, "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." A person's true nature can be seen in our acts and in our words. We will be judged accordingly. Jesus says evil comes from within.

Jesus is trying to teach that it's what comes from the heart that is important. The Psalmist writes "who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue...while he honors those who fear the Lord" Psalm 15. 2,4. The truth is not how I wash my hands it is about our relationship with God and my neighbor. St James writes that, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world." We are called to focus on our actions and relationship with God. Like the Pharisees it is easy to judge others behavior without considering our own actions/inactions. We are called to help others by our charity.

God in His infinite wisdom knows we are weak and will fall short. Thus, Jesus has given the Church and the faithful the Sacrament of Confession. God also gave us freewill. We can choose. We have the ability to choose to use the Sacraments of the Church to strengthen our relationship with God which helps us on our journey towards heaven.

Let us do an examination of conscience every night. Remember we are all on a spiritual journey, yet we are all at different points in our life, let us not judge others but focus on ourselves. May we grow in our relationship with God. Let our actions reflect that we are God's children. Let us grow in charity toward one another.