

## MARK 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture:

This people honours me only with lip-service,  
while their hearts are far from me.  
The worship they offer me is worthless,  
the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions.' He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean.'

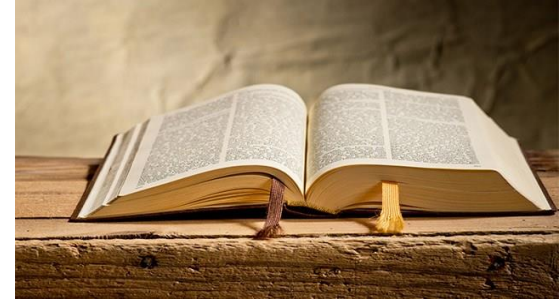
**COMMENTARY:** When we make an effort to love God, we are also making an effort to love the Way of God. Lip service is when we go through rituals, keep laws but our hearts are far from what must be our focus. When this happens, the heart gradually is taken over by all that is false. A selfish person emerges. That is the kind of person who commits the sins listed above.

The psalm today says it all in the response: **The just will live in the presence of the Lord: i.e. those who move out**

# Liturgy of The Word

1.9.24

22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



**The just will live in the presence of the Lord.**

Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain?  
They who walk without fault;  
they who act with justice  
and speak the truth from their heart;  
they who do not slander with their tongue.

They who do no wrong to their brothers and sisters,  
who cast no slur on their neighbour,  
who hold the godless in disdain,  
but honour those who fear the Lord.

They who keep their pledge, come what may;  
who take no interest on a loan  
and accept no bribes against the innocent.  
Such a person will stand firm for ever.

## **DEUTERONOMY 4:1-2, 6-8**

Moses said to the people: ‘Now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today, and observe them, that you may have life and may enter and take possession of the land that the Lord the God of your fathers is giving you. You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God just as I lay them down for you. Keep them, observe them, and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding. When they come to know of all these laws they will exclaim, “No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation.” And indeed, what great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him? And what great nation is there that has laws and customs to match this whole Law that I put before you today?’

**COMMENTARY:** At first read this text could be seen as simply a command to obey law. This law however is rooted in love, in the Covenant God initiated. Moses has given them a “way” and if we bear in mind all that has gone before, and all that comes after, we will soon discover that Jewish law demands we live justly: e.g. love God and your neighbour as yourself.

Moses too is aware that we must witness to God’s power and this can only be achieved by observing the law revealed to them.

## **JAMES 1:17-18,21-22,27**

It is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that he had created.

Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. But you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.

Pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

**COMMENTARY:** The apostle James is clearly reflecting on what has been gifted to the world in Jesus. He is encouraging the people to accept the Word, for he knows its power. He too sees the need to live caring for those in need: in his day the orphans and widows.

Who we support today is anyone in need, but what is vital to notice is how genuine faith moves us out of self-centredness. When we consider how blessed the world is and ask why there is hunger and suffering, there is only one answer: selfishness.

**Love is proven in deeds, not words.**