CELEBRATING AT HOME

22ND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Washing hearts, not hands *(Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23)*

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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

We are the body of Christ.
We are gathered with the whole Church,
in this moment of prayer.

Preparing to hear the Word

Lord Jesus,
you call us to live with your heart.

Lord Jesus,
you speak to us the word of truth.

Lord Jesus,
you feed us with your very self.

Scripture Reading *(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.'

Reflection - *Washing hearts, not hands*

This weekend we resume reading from St Mark's Gospel. This Sunday's episode is about ritual purity verses purity of heart. The Pharisees were a group of especially observant Jews. They took ritual observance very seriously. These observant Pharisees and some scribes criticise the disciples for 'not following the tradition of the elders' by not washing their hands before eating.

This passage is not about good hygiene but about a ritual practice. By the time of Jesus the Pharisees wanted to extend the laws of ritual purity, which applied only to priests, to all the people. Jesus accuses them of substituting the law of God with mere human regulations.

The second point that Jesus makes is that it is not what goes into a person from outside which makes them unclean, but what they harbour in their hearts and minds.

We, too, can fall into the trap of thinking that our ritual practices (going to Mass, saying the Rosary, etc) are all that is necessary to be good followers of Jesus.

Some Christians seem to think that ritual practice is about being at rights with God; almost like 'paying God off'. That having been done, they are free to do what they like in their actions towards other human beings.

The teaching of Jesus in the Gospel today challenges both those views.

It is the reform of our hearts, not our ritual practices, which needs attention and is most important in living out the vocation God has given us. If the goodness of God is not seen through us, where can it be seen?

Jesus reminds his listeners that evil does not come from the outside, but from within. According to Jesus,

being at rights with God is not achieved through ritual practice but through inner conversion to the mind and heart of God.

Real religion, according to the Jesus tradition, is not about ritual practise but about how we treat each other.

It's our hearts, not our hands, which need washing.

Prayers of Intercession

Eternal God,
You implant your Word of life in us.
Help us to listen attentively and to act faithfully.

Free our hearts from evil intention.
May we allow your goodness to shine though us.

Source of life and wisdom
wrap us in your goodness.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,
nurture in us what is good
and, by your watchful care,
keep safe what you have nurtured.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

May the Lord bless us,
keep us from all evil
and lead us to life everlasting. Amen.

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.

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