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22nd Ordinary Sunday - 29 August 2021

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29 August 2021

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

These days, we are all familiar with hitting the restart buttons on our devices that make them work better. Sometimes we need to do this with our understanding of the laws and observances of God. Far from being pointless obligations, they are always a means of helping us grow in our love of the Lord.

(Social Justice Sunday in Australia)

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to fulfil the Law. Lord have mercy.

You call us to have clean hearts. Christ have mercy.

You reconcile us with the Father. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

In this reading, Moses explains to the people the reason that they follow the Law: it is in order that they may have life. It is never an end in and of itself: it is a sign of God's closeness to the people.

Second Reading

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

This Sunday, we begin our reading the Letter of James. In today's reading, James reminds his hearers – and us as well – that all good gifts come from the Father of all light. Our response is simple: we must be doers of the word, not just hearers.

Gospel Reading

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

We return to our reading of Mark's Gospel this Sunday after our long excursion in the John's gospel. In today's reading, Jesus is at odds with the Pharisees about what is clean and what is unclean. Minor laws and observances about ritual cleanliness do not and cannot replace the supreme law of love.

Reflection

Both today's first reading from the book of Deuteronomy, and the gospel reading from Mark's Gospel talk about the Law which was observed by the Jewish people. In the gospels, Jesus is often presented as challenging the Jewish Law, and those people amongst the Jews – the scribes and Pharisees, about whom we hear so much in the gospels – who were the custodians of the Jewish Law. Now, this can give us an incorrect understanding of the place of the Jewish Law, not only in the lives of the people of Israel, but I think this attitude can also give us an incorrect understanding of the role of Law in our lives as people of faith. It is important that we have a full and clear understanding of the Jewish Law, for the Jewish people are indeed our ancestors in faith.

We are all familiar with the highpoint of the Jewish Law – the Ten Commandments. The section of the book of Deuteronomy which we heard today tells the story of Moses preparing the Israelite people to receive the Ten Commandments which will happen later in the Book. If we listen closely to the reading from the book of Deuteronomy we learn that these minor laws are only ever a means to an end, "Now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs which 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."

Observe the Law in order that you may have life. Observe the Law in order that you may enter and take possession of the land that the Lord gives you. These minor laws have little value in themselves. Many of them reflect the end point of a somewhat disparate group of people – the Israelites – trying to live together and become a community, trying to become the people of God. They are a means to an end. Observing these minor laws will put the Israelites into the right frame of mind, will put them into the right spirit to faithfully observe the greatest law. And for the Jewish people to observe the greatest Law – by following the Ten Commandments – was to walk in the way of the Lord. For the Jewish people, to observe the Law was to be close to the Lord. As Moses says to his people at the end of today's first reading, "Keep these laws, observe these laws and they will demonstrate to the people your wisdom and understanding...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?"

In today's Gospel, the scribes and the Pharisees question Jesus because his disciples had not washed their hands in the manner prescribed by the Law. In response to this question, Jesus criticises the Pharisees and Scribes:

This people honours me only with lip service,
while their hearts are far from me.

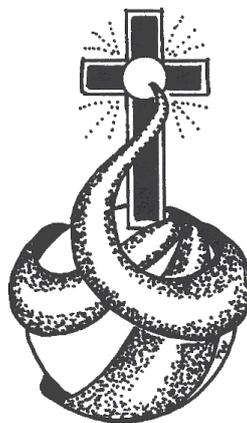
The worship they offer me is worthless,
the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

The Pharisees had got things out of perspective. They were presenting the minor laws about hygiene – washing hands and cups and dishes – as being as important as the Ten Commandments which, elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus sums up as love of God and love of neighbour.

But the reason why Mark wrote these words of Jesus down in his gospel was not to score points against the Pharisees. The reason Mark records these words of Jesus is to ensure that no one in his community made the same mistake. Mark wants to make sure that no one in his community confused minor laws – the means to the end – with the supreme Law: love of God and love of neighbour. The scribes and Pharisees had confused something external – the observance of law – with something inner – a heart overflowing with Love of God and Love of Neighbour.

We, too, can make this same mistake. We, too, can observe the law for its own sake, and confuse this with the Supreme Law: Love of God and Love of Neighbour. We, too, can confuse external appearances with the inner intention of a person's heart. Again, the words of Jesus which Mark records for his community are directed at us today, "Nothing which goes into a person from outside can make them unclean; it is the things which come out of a person that make them unclean."

As St James reminds us in today's second reading, "All that is good, everything that is perfect which is given us from above comes down from the Father of all light."



God, you
are good
and forgiving
and full
of love.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Planted in our hearts are the seeds of God's goodness and love so that we may glorify Jesus with our lives. On this Social Justice Sunday, with hearts open to the Spirit, we come with our intentions:

Petitions

Let us pray for Pope Francis, our bishops and all the clergy. May their lives be an example of pure love and goodness inspiring the Church, as we approach the Plenary Council.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the leaders of our country. May they remember in justice to put the needs of the people before their own gain, particularly in this time of pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for world leaders. May they work towards just and equitable distribution of the vaccination materials for all people.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our hospitals and all medical staff. May the services they provide bring hope, consolation and healing to the families and individuals in their care.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who are in prison. May they be born again in their hearts and desire to follow Jesus by living and sharing the Good News with others.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our Parish community. May we accept the leading of the Holy Spirit to provide goodness and share love in our wider community.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, as we come in faith we know that you hear our petitions, through the power of the Holy Spirit and in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Blessed Jesus, at your word. C. Winkworth. 531
For the beauty of the earth. F. Pierpoint. 427
Grant to us, O Lord. L. Deiss. 303
Lord, to whom shall we go? M. Herry. 189
Praise the Lord, you heavens, adore him. E. Osler, et. al./ Beethoven. 409
Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour. B. Farrell. 407
Seek ye first the kingdom of God. K. Lafferty. 456
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 36

AOV1

For the beauty of the earth. F. Pierpoint. 123
Lord, to whom shall we go? M. Herry. 6
Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour. B. Farrell. 28
Seek ye first. K. Lafferty. 48
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 83

AOV2

Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170

AOV4Kids

A family prayer, K. Bates SM. 16
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB

The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 817

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Grant to us, O Lord. Lucien Deiss CSSp. 291
Return to God. Marty Haugen. 298
Blessed Jesus, at your word. Tobias Clausnitzer, trans. Catherine Winkworth. 457
Love is his word. Luke Connaughton. 553
Praise to you, O Christ our Saviour. Bernadette Farrell. 587
Take the word of God with you. James Harrison. 607
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 456

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalms 14: *The just will live in the presence of the Lord.*
Psalm 14: Anthony Briggs. CWB 396
Psalm 15 (14): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 86
The one who does justice. Tony Alonso. LPB pg. 148

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TCS) [Communion, Sending]