

## **Reflection for 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B 1**

**Deut 4:1-2,6-8 James 1:17-18,21-22,27 Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23**

Today's readings explain what true religion is. It is not simply the scrupulous external observance of rules, laws, traditions, and rituals. It is a loving, obedient relationship with God expressed in recognizing God's presence in our fellow human beings and rendering them loving and humble service.

**In the 1<sup>st</sup> reading,** Moses tells us listen to God, do what God tells you and you may have life.

**In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading,** St. James also tells us to listen to the Word of God, be doers of the Word and not just hearers of it. And care for the needy.

**In today's Gospel,** the Pharisees and some Scribes asked Jesus why his disciples don't respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?

Jesus condemns what I call cosmetic spirituality. External piety without internal holiness is hypocrisy.

Jesus answered them, you are hypocrites 'This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me'. What Jesus is saying to them is you've got the scriptures, but it has not yet touched your heart.

Until the Word of God touches our heart, it will not serve the purpose that it is meant to serve. And that is to change us from the inside so that we can love. To change us from inside so that we can do everything which the Gospel says.

The scribes and Pharisees see religion as ritual, ceremonial, rules, and regulations. The emphasis was not on building a relationship with God and one's fellow human beings, but on checking out one's own external behaviour. For to observe them was to please God; to break them was to sin.

Yes, there are doctrines and there are human regulations, but as Jesus points out, these things, if they have a place, are simply things that are put in place to enable the Word of God to come alive in us so that the Word of God may penetrate our soul, touch our heart, and change us.

Then what is important is when we are changed, we too can bring about that same change and that goodness in others.

It's not the impositions of a law or a regulation which brings about the goodness in another person. It is the goodness in us as changed by God which will draw out goodness in others and change others.

God gives us religious practices not so that we get the ritual right but so that we get life right.

It is very much easier to observe external religious regulations than it is to love the unlovable and to help the needy at the cost of one's own time and money and comfort.

What is the point of the Gospels? It is to change me so that I might love God, love my neighbour with a pure heart and love myself.

What matters to God is not so much how we act, but why we act; not so much what we actually do, but what we wish in our heart of hearts, to do.

Jesus tells us that the source of evil is within us. It has its roots in the heart. It is from the heart which our thoughts, desires, words, and deeds flow.

The corruption of the heart is the worst kind of badness.

The heart is the source. We must purify the heart. How does one purify the heart? By focusing on love. Love purifies the heart.

Today's readings invite us to focus on what is important in life. What is important:

+Family, children, friends, people are important.

+Loving, laughing and forgiving are important.

+Prayer is important even when is hard.

+One day when I am lying down on my dying bed, I will thank God for the opportunities I had to teach a child, to visit the sick, to spend time with the dying, to feed the hungry, to cry with the broken hearted, to welcome the stranger, to make a difference, to be a blessing to be someone. Serving others is important.

Let us ask for the grace to become the doers of his Word as Jesus was the doer of his Fathers' will.

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