

## **22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **God desires our sincerity, not lip service.**

The Christian life is a call to holiness, authentic faith, and sincere service. God who calls us to a life of faith desires sincere service from us, and not lip service. He does not want us to be pretentious and hide behind the external acts of religious rules, laws, traditions and rituals.

But as Christians, we sometimes fall into the traps of hypocrisy, self-deception, and lip service. We appear holy and righteous on the outside but inside us are ungodly and ugly things.

The readings for this Sunday challenge us to examine the authenticity of our faith and service to God. The readings urge us to follow the Lord with pure and sincere hearts and by our good example draw others to God.

In the first reading, Moses stressed the importance of the commandments of God. Moses instructed the people of Israel and all of us to follow the statutes and decrees of the Lord so they could grow in wisdom and flourish in life. He admonished them to obey God's laws and by their ways of life become a model and shining example for the other nations.

In the gospel, the Pharisees and Scribes accused Jesus and his disciples of failing to follow the traditions and custom of their elders. The disciples ate their meals without washing their hands first. In the view of these religious leaders, the disciples broke an exterior ritual, a tradition and custom they so cherished. They made a big deal of the disciples' behavior and called for their heads.

Jesus blasted the Pharisees and Scribes for placing human traditions over divine commands. He challenged them to sit up, to overcome their hypocrisy, and lip service to God.

Jesus made it clear that real uncleanness comes from what is within the human heart. He pointed out that evil thoughts and actions such as fornication, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, jealousy, envy, slander, pride and arrogance emerge from human hearts.

Each of us needs to examine what is inside us. Is my heart pure or impure? What efforts do I make each day to prevent myself from entertaining evil thoughts? Do I succumb to immoral acts, impure imaginations, vengeful feelings or view pornographic images?

Jesus teaches us to keep ourselves clean on the inside. He calls us to open our hearts to his words and act on them. Saint James emphasizes this message in the second reading by telling us to be doers of God's word, and not just hearers, deluding or deceiving ourselves.

Saint James reminds us that authentic religion is the type that maintains personal purity before God and reaches out in love and compassion to the distressed and afflicted especially, the orphans and widows.

The psalmist tells us that those who act justly will live in the presence of the Lord forever. As we gather around the table of the Lord to celebrate the Eucharist, let us seek to be transformed in the power of God's love and grace. Let us ask the Lord to wrap us in his goodness and help us to live in a way that expresses the right relationship with his divine laws.

God bless,

Have a wonderful Labor Day weekend!

Rev. Dr. Ben