



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark 7: 1-13.

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts. You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition. He went on to say, How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother, and Whoever curses father or mother shall die. Yet you say, If someone says to father or mother, Any support you might have had from me is qorban (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things.

Mark 7:1-13.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, thank you for your Gospel and for all the truth it teaches me. Thank you for warning me of attitudes and dispositions that could become temptations for me. I love you for your goodness and mercy, and I entrust myself into your loving hands.

Petition:

Lord, help me to serve you sincerely, in truth and in love.

1. "This people honors me only with lip service, while their hearts are far from me:"

Jesus calls his disciples to authenticity. Too often so-called disciples give the impression of following him, while at the same time accepting sensual loves and lusts in their heart. Although the Pharisees display the outward trappings of holiness, the way they treat Jesus and others betrays their true character. Jesus would call them "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 15:27): clean and bright on the outside, but full of dead men's bones within. Self-righteousness would be their downfall. Such dispositions may lend the proud man certain short-term security, but it will always be illusory since it is not rooted in the truth. Is there any way in which I also pay tribute to God with my lips but say something else in my heart, or behave contrariwise in my actions?

2. "The worship they offer me is worthless:"

True worship begins with humility, when the soul recognizes that it possesses no good in and of itself, but that all of its goodness comes from God. The Pharisees offered no real worship to God since, in effect, they worshipped only themselves by relying more on their talents and goodness than on the goodness that comes from God. It is not insignificant that when Jesus describes a Pharisee's prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, he says The Pharisee prayed this prayer to himself (Luke 18:11). How can I make sure that my prayer is truly devoted, meaning that I am addressing Our Lord with the words of my heart?

3. "You make God's word null and void:"

The Pharisees used the talents and gifts God had given them not for God's glory, but for their own personal gain, whether that gain consisted of praise and admiration or personal comfort and ease. True worship of God, truly placing God above all else, involves using the things God created as means to reaching him. As number 226 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "It means making good use of created things: faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him:

My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you.

My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you.

My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you."

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, thank you for my life and all the good things you have given me. Help me to realize that you have created everything and that all I have is from you. May I use all I have to serve others and as a means to come closer to you, the source of all good.

Resolution:

I will examine my conscience to see if I am using any of my gifts and talents to glorify or serve only myself. If so, I'll strive to put these same gifts at the service of God.