



After Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, "Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe that you are present here as I turn to you in prayer. I trust and have confidence in your desire to give me every grace I need to receive today. Thank you for your love, thank you for your immense generosity toward me. I give you my life and my love in return.

Petition: Lord, grant me this grace of conversion.

1. Law for the Law's Sake: The Mosaic Law was intended *to free them for worship*, delivering them from slavery to pagan gods and from slavery to sin. When the Law (and the added customs and regulations) became an end in itself, it was truncated and severed from the One to whom it was meant to lead. Today in the Catholic Church there are enough laws, customs and regulations to make even the most rigorous Pharisee proud. The danger is that we can fall into one of two traps. First, we can adhere to them with such vigor that we lose sight of the One they are freeing us to worship. We don't allow our hearts and minds to be educated and formed by them, we just follow them blindly. We wind up cleaning the outside of the cup and stopping there, without going on to see God's love and let it purify our hearts.

2. The Second Trap: The second trap we can fall into is at the other extreme: to give ourselves an easy pass by presuming that “if my heart is in the right place, I don’t need to worry about all these rules and such.” With a lax attitude we permit ourselves to ease up on fulfilling these laws which in truth will free us. “I know today is Sunday and I should go to Mass, but it’s vacation! God knows I’m a good person.” Yet it is in the Sunday Mass that we receive the many graces necessary toward our being that “good person”. The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy, as with any of the Ten Commandments and customs of the Church, is there to lead us to God. These free us from our often confused, subjective conclusions about how we should worship God and live our lives.

3. Cleaning the Cup: “Charity covers a multitude of sin” (1 Peter 4:8). The law of love is the most important of all the commandments of the Lord. In Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Mark, Christ responds to a scribe’s question about the first of all the commandments: “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Love of God and neighbor is both the source and the summit of the Law of the Old Covenant and of the New. Living these two greatest commandments purifies and cleanses our hearts—the inside of the cup. So, when Christ says to give alms, he is telling the Pharisees to love their neighbors. Then their hearts will be clean.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I want my heart always to be focused on you. I need your guidance, for I can’t do it alone. I need you to teach me how to love you, how to worship and serve you. The laws you give me free me and guide me toward you. Help me to see your hand leading me ever closer to you.

Resolution: If there is a rule or custom of the Church that I don’t understand or don’t practice, I will read up on it to come to understand better how it frees me and guides me in my relationship with Christ.