

# A Clean Heart

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 5: 27-32.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. "It was also said, whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, today I will contemplate your love in action. You continually go out of your way to make your presence felt in my life, and I am very grateful. Thank you, Lord, for another day; it is another opportunity to deepen my love and friendship with you.

Petition: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

1. Guard Your Eyes: Concerning purity of heart, Jesus takes this demand for purity a step further than the Old Testament. He teaches that to even look at a woman with lust in your heart, seeing her as merely an object to satisfy your lustful desires, is seriously sinful. Jesus does not say that it is sinful to simply recognize a woman as beautiful, or by extension, a woman recognizing a man as handsome. It is when we see the other as an object and have impure thoughts about them that we give in to sin. In other words, the temptation itself is not a sin; it is when we accept that temptation into our heart and give it a home by willfully playing with it in our mind that we step over the line. Lord Jesus, it's so easy to grant myself concessions in this area, but with your aid I will be firm in my resolve to guard my senses, remembering an adage from the computer age: "Garbage in, garbage out!"

2. If It Puts Your Soul in Danger, It's Got to Go: Christ's call to holy purity, like every other virtue, is eminently positive. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Purity is a consequence of the love that prompts us to commit to Christ our soul and body, our faculties and senses. Jesus uses the images of "right eye" and "right hand" to refer to that which we value most. He is telling us that if that which we value most in life has become a stumbling block in our relationship with the Lord, then, simply put, it's got to go. It is far better to lose a possession or a position or to break off a relationship than to risk the eternal salvation of our soul. We must be prepared to fight for righteousness with all of our strength, being ready to eliminate whatever could clearly lead us to offend the Lord.

3. And the Two Shall Become One: Jesus re-established the principle of the absolute indissolubility of marriage, a principle that has been unhesitatingly taught by the Church from the very beginning. Pope Pius XI reminded us in *Casti Connubii* (December 31, 1930) about the immutable and inviolable truth that "matrimony was not instituted or re-established by men, but by God. ... Consequently those laws can in no way be subject to human wills or to any contrary pact made even by the contracting parties. This is the teaching of Sacred Scripture; it is the constant and universal Tradition of the Church." Marriage endures until death though the love may last forever. What God has joined together, let nothing separate. Am I living my marriage as a covenant? Do I treat my spouse with respect and affection? Do I dedicate my heart, time and energy to cultivating our love so it will endure and flourish?

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, I want to live with purity, and I know that this requires a strong will and a constant effort in this world that encourages instant gratification of the senses. Give me the strength in particular to guard my eyes and control my imagination. Help me to be exquisitely faithful to my spouse.

Resolution: I will promote the virtue of purity in my personal life and set a good example for others by incorporating into my lifestyle the time-tested ascetical methods that the Church has proposed to us down through the ages: frequent confession and Communion; devotion to Our Lady; a spirit of prayer and mortification; guarding of the senses; flight from occasions of sin; and striving to avoid idleness by always being engaged in doing useful things.