

What Can Separate Us from the Love of Christ?

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle B

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

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 summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."

Introductory Prayer:

Lord God, I come from dust and to dust I shall return. You, however, existed before all time, and every creature takes its being from you. You formed me in my mother's womb with infinite care, and you watch over me tenderly. I hope you will embrace my soul at my death to carry me home to heaven to be with you forever. Thank you for looking upon me and blessing me with your love. Take my love in return. I humbly offer you all that I am.

Petition:

Lord, give me confidence in the power of your grace.

1. Look at the Real Dangers:

Christ feared nothing. He wasn't afraid of Satan. He wasn't afraid of public opinion. He wasn't afraid of the narrow road and hard path. Even though it would cause him to sweat blood, he wasn't even afraid to fulfill his Father's plan for him as the Suffering Servant. Through his words and way of life, he was constantly encouraging his followers to watch out for dangers and to pray not to be put to the test. He knows that there are real dangers out there: "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away" (Matthew 5:29). "Woe to him who scandalizes one of these little ones" (cf. Matthew 18:6). "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6). "Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat" (Luke 22:31). Christ will always point out for me the real dangers that exist in my life.

2. I Will Not Take Them from You:

Christ clearly warns us, and our own experience confirms, that God normally will not remove these dangers from our lives. These dangers will usually remain whether they be exterior — "Father, I ask not that you remove them from this world" — or interior. When St. Paul would ask Christ to remove the thorn from his side, simply replies, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). In the thick of these sufferings, it is hard for us to understand why God would permit them. But maybe we can find some reason in Christ's words today. May it never be said of a Christian: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Suffering and hardship often keep our heart close to Christ.

3. I Will Give You the Grace to Overcome Them:

Very much aware of both the internal and external dangers that would await them, Christ was not afraid to send his apostles out into the world. He sends us out as "sheep among wolves" (cf. Matthew 10:16) into a world that will "hate you as it hated me" (cf. Matthew 24:9). He distributes his divine word and precious grace to the world through us, fragile earth envessels. Through his Vicar on Earth, he tells us, "Be not afraid." Moreover, he expects us to produce one-hundred fold and give fruits that will last. What is the key to his confidence? The key is the humble person who is ever ready to look inwardly and purify his heart from the smallest attachment, the slightest impurity, making it an acceptable dwelling place for Christ. What...who...can separate us from the love of Christ? What is there to fear but those "evils that come from within and defile?"

Conversation with Christ:

Thankyou, Lord, for reminding me about the beauty of being your friend, and at the same time about the awesome responsibility that goes along with it. Please give me the generosity to live my role as your ambassador and help me to continually spread your message of love with all that I do.

Resolution:

I will set aside some time today and ask Christ to help me identify any attachments to sin in my heart. I will write them down and look for concrete ways to purify my heart from them.