



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 23:27-32.

Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth. Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the memorials of the righteous, and you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shedding the prophets' blood.' Thus you bear witness against yourselves that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets; now fill up what your ancestors measured out!"

Matthew 23:27-32.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I believe that you are "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). I humbly come before you today. I trust completely in you, and therefore I want my life to be an open book where you write the pages of my life story.

Petition:

Lord Jesus, grant me a sincere and humble heart.

1. What You See Is Not What You Get!

One of the sternest reprimands Jesus gave was against the hypocrisy of those charged with the grave task of leading God's people. They were called to transmit the hope of God's promise of deliverance: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Jeremiah 24:7). Yet their vain righteousness was nothing but self-indulgence that burdened the flock of Israel to the point of despair. Instead of helping the people of God to turn from sin to a life of fidelity to God's love, they preyed upon the spiritual sensitivity of the people for their own sordid gain.

2. Guillotine of Saints or Saints to the Guillotine?

Human respect is the "guillotine of saints." It has a suicidal effect and a deadly capacity to cut short the action of a zealous heart. Human respect renders love of God and souls

sterile because it is nothing but pride disguised as fear, doubt, or the sophism of not wanting to hurt others' feelings. True charity, on the other hand, gives testimony to the truth, regardless of the consequences this may bring – even persecution or the sword (cf. Romans 8:35). Shunning human respect may lead us to the "guillotine" of ridicule or persecution, but then we are on our way to becoming saints.

3. Like Father, Like Son; Hypocrites All:

The Pharisees' ancestors killed the prophets for chastising the people in God's name. Now, Jesus ironically urges the Pharisees to prove themselves worthy of their heritage. Jesus separated himself from the religious leaders of the time. Unlike the Pharisees and Temple priests, who had become like mercenaries for the flock of Israel, Jesus was the Good Shepherd. Jesus instituted a new priesthood, based on his own: that of the Suffering Servant, the Paschal Lamb, the Messiah, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He made all things new and in truth set us free from sin.

Conversation with Christ:

Oh Jesus, I thank you with all my heart for redeeming me. You let me hear your voice gently calling me. Strengthen me in faith, and fill me with your love so that I can one day join St Paul in saying, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Resolution:

I will be an enemy of hypocrisy and insincerity in my dealings with others today.