



Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You lock the Kingdom of Heaven before human beings. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him a child of Gehenna twice as much as yourselves. "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If one swears by the Temple, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gold of the Temple, one is obligated.' Blind fools, which is greater, the gold, or the Temple that made the gold sacred? And you say, 'If one swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gift on the altar, one is obligated.' You blind ones, which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? One who swears by the altar swears by it and all that is upon it; one who swears by the Temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; one who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I come to you again in prayer. Even though I cannot see you, I know through faith that you are present in my life. I hope in your promise to be with me. I love you, and I know you love me. Accept this prayer as a token of my love.

Petition: Lord, help me to be a person of great integrity – the same inside and out.

1. No Hypocrites Need Apply: The scribes and Pharisees lacked the authenticity and rectitude of conscience needed to please God. We need to let our behavior, our word and our conscience be in harmony and open before God. Conscience is that secret sanctuary where we are alone with God and we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speak to us in the depths of our heart. To violate that conscience, that is, to go against what we know to be true, is to deny ourselves what is most important to our salvation. A good

conscience is the greatest good thing we can possess in this life. It gives us peace, serenity and an assurance of our perseverance in good.

2. Misleading Others Has a Price: Christ is very harsh on those who lead others astray, especially those who have a responsibility to teach and guide others in the way of salvation. It is a great sin to give scandal and to lead others away from the path of truth. There are many examples of this: There are those entrusted to teach in the name of the Church but substitute their personal opinions, and those who give a testimony of disordered lifestyles, especially to the young and impressionable. The salvation of all of us is linked together; we need to build each other up and help each other on the way to Christ. Others have a right to our good example and to our speaking truth.

3. No Swearing Here! Jesus warns against idle words, exaggerations and swearing in the name of God or by his altar. He wants us to be sincere in all we say and do, so that the integrity of our lives may be apparent to all who see us. If we live with a clear conscience and act before God in all things, we can then simply give our word and have it mean all we have inside us. What a wonderful thing it is to deal with people who are simple and transparent, who can be taken at face value, because to be devious or calculating never occurs to them, or to be in any way false or insincere.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, give me the grace of real sincerity of heart in dealing with you and with others. Teach me to give my word and mean it with all my heart.

Resolution: I will review my examination of conscience to make sure I am going deep enough to know what God wants of me.