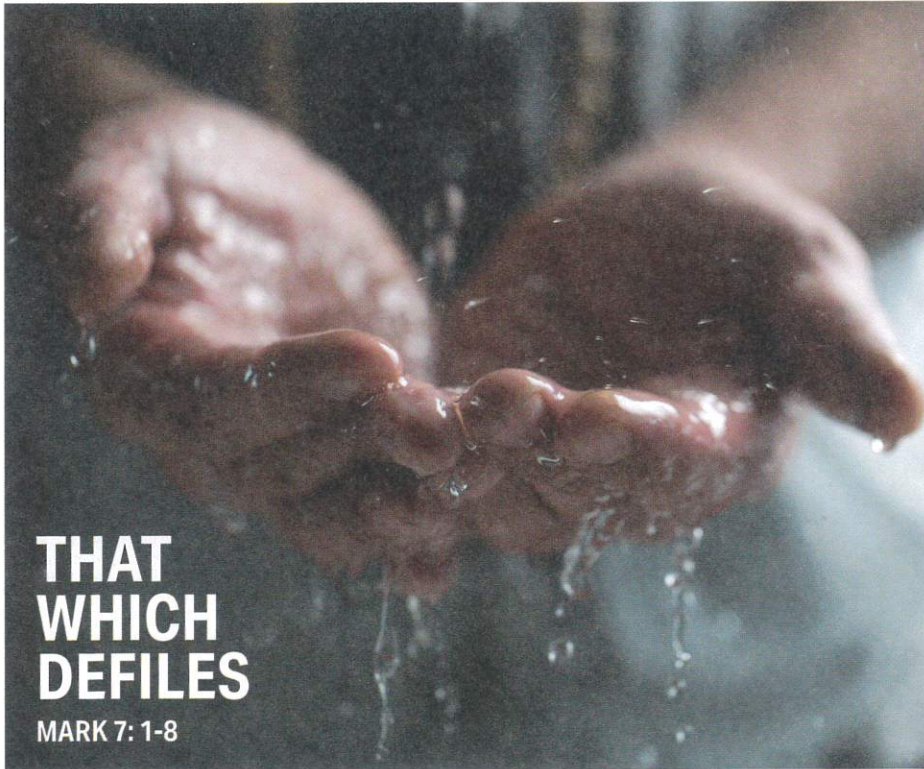


Sunday Message

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • 1 September 2024 • Psalter Week 2



REFLECT

My limited experience of working in Northern Mozambique brought me into contact with many beautiful elements of local culture. Ritual and ceremony formed an important part of day-to-day life, whether it was a meeting of local community leaders, the sharing of workload in the fields, the celebration of the Eucharist on a Sunday, the burial of the dead. Every aspect of life brought with it age-old traditions. On entering the home of a family, a ceremonial washing of hands takes place, where the host moves around the room, usually with warm water and soap, to wash hands, before the meal commences. There is such beauty and warmth in this ritual. The guest is being formally welcomed into the home and the gesture of washing of hands, is equally an extension of the hand of friendship and hospitality.

But the meaning of hand washing in today's Gospel story takes on a different flavour. As a matter of fact, there is a feeling of hostility and tension growing between the Pharisees and Jesus. A far cry from the experience of table fellowship in Mozambique!

The subject of discussion between the Pharisees and Jesus has nothing to do with hygiene or with extending hospitality to the guest. It has to do with an understanding of God's holiness, where everything is ordered and in its place.

Many might be tempted to see in this Gospel a simple criticism by Jesus of external observances of the Law, or of external observances of the faith. But crucially, with the arrival of Jesus, our attention is drawn to the closeness of God to his people. The letter of James speaks of this relationship – the Word is planted in us. When we call upon God, we discover that he is not merely close, but within us, speaking to us with his/her Word which leads to salvation and life. ■

THAT WHICH DEFILES

MARK 7: 1-8

Jesus is faced with some serious questioning from religious leaders in today's Gospel. According to the Law, a ceremonial washing of hands before every meal and between each course was required.

It was a sign of reverence before God and was a custom to be observed by all who came to the temple. In the broader context of this Gospel, Jesus is not concerned with these preoccupations of the local pious brigade. Instead, he will leave this encounter in the temple and go out to honour the Syrophenician Woman and heal a deaf and mute man. The Gospel is not worried with the ritual observances of Jesus and his disciples. Everything points to the activity of Christ in the lives of the community and how his presence has the power to heal and transform.

Pointing to the followers of Jesus and accusing them of defiling themselves with their dirty hands reflects poorly on the Jewish leadership, who rank outward gestures and signs higher than gestures of the heart. Jesus knows that no external law will change people's hearts. Instead, he tells us to "set your hearts first on the kingdom of God." ■

DO

It is often said that Chapter 17 of John's Gospel contains the seeds of Christian Spirituality. Take some time this week to read this prayer of Jesus.

LEARN

"There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph 4: 4-6)

SAY

Where there is shouting,
let us practise listening;
Where there is confusion,
let us inspire harmony;
Where there is exclusion,
let us offer solidarity;
Where there is falsehood,
let us bring truth.

(Pope Francis)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.
O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;

you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy. Moses said to the people: "Now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today, and observe them, that you may have life and may enter and take possession of the land that the Lord the God of your fathers is giving you. You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God just as I lay them down for you. Keep them, observe them, and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding. When they come to know of all these laws they will exclaim, 'No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation.' And indeed, what great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him? And what great nation is there that has laws and customs to match this whole Law that I put before you today?"

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 14(15):2-5

Response: The just will live in the presence of the Lord.

1. Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain? He who walks without fault; he who acts with justice and speaks the truth from his heart. (R.)
2. He who does no wrong to his brother, who casts no slur on his neighbour, who holds the godless in disdain, but honours those who fear the Lord. (R.)
3. He who keeps his pledge, come what may; who takes no interest on a loan and accepts no bribes against the innocent. Such a man will stand firm for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING James 1:17-18, 21-22,27

A reading from the letter of St James. It is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that he had created. Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. But you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves. Pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia! Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life; you have the message of eternal life. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 7:1-8, 14-15,21-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark. The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?" He answered, "It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture:

This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions." He called the people to him again and said, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it

is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean."

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (all bow during the next three lines) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacred offering, O Lord, confer on us always the blessing of salvation, that what it celebrates in mystery it may accomplish in power. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON
How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly table, we beseech you, Lord, that, being the food of charity, it may confirm our hearts and stir us to serve you in our neighbour. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

