

Homily For Tuesday of the 28th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Oct. 11, 2022

Gal.5:1-6 "You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourself off from Christ."

Psalms 119:41-48 "I find delight in your commandments because I love them and will meditate on them."

Luke 11:37-41 "You clean the outside of the cup but inside you are full of greed and wickedness."

Inside and Out

Introduction

I have told this story before, but I think it fits today's readings. In the years B.C. (before covid), Bishop McGrattan of the Diocese of Calgary, would tell Ministers of Holy Communion not to be so obvious with their hand purification before serving the Eucharist. By all means do it, but don't make it into what he called 'The Rite of Purelle'. But now, I think our bishop agrees that, because of tremendous anxiety and fear amongst the people, we must demonstrate before communion that we have purified our hands. This behaviour is reasonable on the one hand. I grew up with very strict rules about washing hands before meals, so I get it. This behaviour also runs the risk of making our societal obsession with physical health more important than our spiritual health.

In today's readings, we see both Jesus and St. Paul severely condemning behaviours that have become empty gestures, having lost any power they would have had, or should have had, to bring someone into a right relationship with God. In fact, they have become a barrier to salvation itself.

Luke

In the incident between Jesus and the Pharisee who invites him to dinner, hygiene is not the issue. This hand washing was a religious ritual, not a hygienic. They are accusing him of not caring about the religious purity rituals of the oral law. This was a body of rituals was designed to supplement God's written Law and intensify its requirements of ritual purity. The intention was good, but the Pharisees

elevated it to an equal level with God's commandments and so they lost the heart of the matter.

Jesus returns the accusation: You Pharisees are focused on external cleansing but you should be focused on what is most important, the inside, where you are filled with evil. But he does not leave it there. He provides a method for that very cleansing of heart. The inside of the cup is almsgiving, works of mercy for the poor. They had done what is so easy to do, which is to rearrange priorities for convenience and to make the spiritual path simple. Jesus condemns a double standard of morality.

There is no doubt that God cares about our bodies, but this passage strongly suggests that we must be at least equally concerned about what's in our hearts. This is something for which we can make a difference, especially by how we behave towards the poor. If you want to clean the inside, give alms. Stop thinking of how to impress people and start lifting up those in need. Jesus is picking up on the tradition of atoning for sins and purifying the heart. You are doing something 'self less' instead of selfish.

Galatians

For the last week, we have been hearing St. Paul rant about the problem of observing of the law rather than embracing the freedom that Christ has won for the Christian. He says you have to choose. In this, he is clearly following the conditions for salvation of Jesus himself.

In the Church at Galatia, there were those saying that it is not enough to have Christ and that you need to be circumcised and obey all the outward observations of the whole law. Today, Baptism has frequently become an outward sign that families do not live out from the heart in obedience to Christ. He suffered persecution, betrayal, torture and death so that we might have freedom from slavery to sin. St. Paul would tell us now as he told the Galatians, don't give up your freedom by counting on empty observance. Those things won't save you. Even baptism has no power to save us if we refuse to open and to activate the gift it offers. The law to which Christ was obedient was love itself.

Psalm

On one level, the psalmist seems to be contradicting the messages of the Gospel passage and the letter to the Galatian Church: "My hope is in your ordinances." "Your decrees are my delight." "I have sought your precepts." Happy are those who keep his decrees." But the more we go through this great psalm, the more we realize that the writer is looking ahead to Christ, inviting us to trust in God, looking to God for how to live our lives. This is a joy, not a superficial burden. To seek the ways of the Lord is to be free, not enslaved by empty rituals. God's law, properly understood and observed, sets hearts on fire for the desire to be free.

Call To Conversion

What a great sadness it is that people leave the Church because our ritual worship has become empty for them, whereas it has so much power in it. It has the power to inspire us to share it with the world, the physically poor who need the physical acts of mercy we can give them, as well as the spiritually poor, who desperately need a reason to hope in something more than the physical.

St. Basil was known to say: "Be mostly afraid of living based on others' opinion." The cleanliness of spirit goes far beyond what we show to impress the world. Pope St. John XXIII, whose memorial is today, had a special concern for the equal dignity of humanity, the unity of all Christians, and world peace. He broke with many of the formalities of the papacy and was affectionately called the "Good Pope".

Our hope and trust is in the Lord who saves us. Let our hearts be filled with every grace and blessing that comes from this knowledge of the truth about who God is and who we are in his sight.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Forsake me not, O Lord, my God. Be not far from me. Make haste and come to my help, O Lord, my strong salvation!*

Collect: *Almighty and merciful God, by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service, grant that we may receive the things you have promised.*

Galatians: *Brothers and sisters, for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. If you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Every man who lets himself be circumcised is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ. You have fallen away from grace. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. The only thing that counts is faith working through love.*

Psalms: *Let your steadfast love come to me, O Lord. Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your ordinances. I will keep your law continually, forever and ever. I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought your precepts. I find my delight in your commandments, because I love them and I will meditate on your statutes.*

Luke: *A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him but was amazed that Jesus did not first wash before dinner. The Lord said: You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Give for alms those things that are within, and see, everything will be clean for you.*