

## Homily For Tuesday of the 5th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

### St Peter's 8:30am Mass - February 12, 2019

**Genesis 1:20 - 2:4** "God finished his work and rested on the 7th day."

**Psalms 8: 3-8** "What is man that you think of him, mortals that you care for us."

**Mark 7: 1-13** "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

### Whose Commandments Are They, Anyway?

#### Introduction

There were a few 'commandments' in my family growing up. There were the big ten from the bible, of course, and respecting my parents was pretty high on the list. But there were a few other behavioural laws too. Probably none of those was more important than washing hands to keep germs at bay. My mother was a nurse and, in those days, nurse training taught that the washing of hands took several minutes and had a very thorough procedure.

#### Mark

Mark is very big into explaining Jewish practices for his readers and his community. In this case it is the fact that hands are considered defiled if not washed thoroughly. This was not about hygiene. It was about customs that were added to the written law, to intensify its emphasis on ritual purity.

The problem for the Pharisees was religious laxity. But the problem for Jesus is that those 'laws' had been elevated to the same status as the revealed law of God. He responds with a vigorous attack on these customs because they distract people from the more important principles of the Mosaic law.

The Pharisees have fallen into the same trap that their earlier leaders did, which is to allow their worship of the Lord to become vain and empty, which means to serve no purpose. In effect, their traditions came to be in competition with God's law. That law, given by God, was a sign that they were a people who had been freed from slavery, both physical, and also spiritual, the slavery to gods that were no gods at all.

In one verse, Jesus says You abandon the commandments of God and hold to human tradition. In the next, he declares "you have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

## **Genesis**

The creation account in Genesis provides us really with the first of God's commandments, even before the ten which Moses received and Jesus cites. Living creatures of every kind from the water and air and land (i.e. richness and variety), were blessed and told to be fruitful and multiply. Goodness and richness and diversity were blessed.

Then humankind, God's own likeness and image, male and female, were given the same command, with the further commands: First, to fill the earth, which means to participate with God in spreading the richness and blessing of creation; Second, to subdue the earth, which means to tame it without destroying it; Third, to have dominion over all the creatures, which, properly understood and translated, means to be stewards, or caretakers, of what God has made.

## **Integration**

It is good for us to ask: What are the commandments we must obey, whether they are specifically stated in Sacred Scripture, or understood as a proper understanding of that same Word of God. We must also ask whether there are human traditions which are taking the place of those Divine commands. Are there ways we have made ourselves into gods by following laws of our own making which put us against what God has commanded. What are the things we see which form the worst kind of idolatry because it means we have replaced the true worship of God with the worship of ourselves?

The creation commandments:

Be fruitful and multiply: Instead, we have a culture which sees much of life a burden, seeking to prevent conception or kill it in the womb.

Man and woman created in God's likeness and image: Instead, we have a culture which rebels against the very nature that God has imprinted upon us.

The Honouring the Sabbath as the day God rested, not because He needed to but as a blueprint for us to set aside a holy day for worship of life and the God who gave it to us.

Commandments referred to by Jesus include:

Honouring of father and mother: Instead, we have a culture which seeks to end life rather than care for the elderly.

Worship in vain: The second of the ten commandments says not to use God's name in vain. We think of this as using swear words, but it means not using God's name for no purpose- in vain.

### **Call To Action**

Eventually, it comes down to what we must do. Will we follow the Truth of Jesus Christ, who died and rose to save us from my sins. Or, will we follow the so called 'truth' that is of our own making.

As individuals, we probably can't change all those new 'traditions' of our culture. One thing we can do that is to reclaim, in our lives and family circles, the holiness of the Sabbath. Let us return make our own worship on Sunday be true worship, not just of our lips, but of our whole hearts.