



Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

Psalms 15:2-3a, 3b-4a,
4b-5

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

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



REFLECTION

Has a loved one ever expressed concern that someone or something is a bad influence on you? On the surface, it may seem like Jesus shuts that conversation down by insisting that it's not what goes "in," but rather, what comes "out" that defiles us. Being around others who sin is not a sin. Jesus modeled that by sharing meals with sinners, without concern about ruining his reputation. He loves everyone unabashedly and calls us to do the same.

But Jesus also had the strength of character and will to not be affected or tempted by the actions of others. We, on the other hand, do not have the divine will of Christ to resist temptation in the same way he did. What's so wrong about watching something with gratuitous sex or playing violent video games? Repeated exposure to something desensitizes us to it. This can be useful for new parents changing messy diapers for the first time, but when applied to morally questionable experiences, those experiences can have lasting, negative effects on our moral compass and life of faith. Certainly, it is important to focus on what comes "out" of you. Just remember that part of a life of mature faith is also taking responsibility for what you can control, particularly with who or what you allow "in."

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you respond to the negative influences in your life? To positive ones?
- ❖ Who are positive role models in your life of faith? How can you be more like them?



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 1, 2024



ACTION

This week, spend some time reflecting on what goes "in" and what comes "out" of you. At the end of each day, make a list of the types of media you consumed (watched, listened to, engaged in), what you read, and what you talked about with your friends. Reflect on whether these things help you in your journey of faith or might cause you to stray from following Jesus. Note one or two ways you can change things so that they are more helpful along your journey with Christ. Then reflect on how you interacted with people and how well your words and actions demonstrated your faith. Make a plan to continue doing the things that reflect Christ and note a few ways in which you can interact better with others in the future.



Reflect on what you can and can't control in your life and how to be proactive in your outlook. <https://youtu.be/qaJt6LTTcwY?t=75>



September 1, 2024

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #125B

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

Psalms 15: 2-3a, 3b-4a, 4b-5

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

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

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Today's Gospel reading invites us to look beyond outward actions and into the heart of what we do and say as followers of Christ. Although the conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus is about ritual action, it does not mean that rituals are bad. Rather, Jesus points us to the deeper meaning—how does our interior disposition affect our true nature? The end of the reading invites us to consider what makes a person unclean. Is it the actions of others and their influence, or is it the heart of the individual. Jesus knows the hearts of his disciples and affirms that what comes from a person's heart is what matters most.

Q FOCUS: *Our actions should express our deepest beliefs.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On September 5, the Church remembers St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa). She began her religious life as a Loreto Sister but later experienced a "call within a call" to leave that order and to serve the poorest of the poor. She went on to found the Missionaries of Charity and spent her life caring for those on the streets of Calcutta, India. Small in stature but mighty in faith, she is an inspiration for us all to serve Jesus by serving others, living out our faith in every moment.

Church Teaching Connection

"Let us make an examination of conscience to see how we embrace the Word of God... If we listen to it in a distracted or superficial way, it will not be of much use. Instead, we must welcome the Word with open minds and hearts, as good soil, in a way that may be assimilated and may bear fruit in real life. Jesus says that the Word of God is like wheat; it is a seed that must grow in practical deeds. In this way the Word itself purifies our heart and actions, and our relationship with God and with others is freed from hypocrisy" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, September 2, 2018).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

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

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. —For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And

there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.—So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?” He responded, “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: / *This people honors me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me; / in vain do they worship me, / teaching as doctrines human precepts. / You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.*” He summoned the crowd again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.

“From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today’s readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

One thing we learned a new appreciation for during the pandemic was the importance of washing our hands. Singing a song, like “Happy Birthday,” for twenty seconds can help us do it properly. In general, washing our hands helps stop the spread of infection and prevents illnesses. So why is Jesus against washing hands? Is he unaware of the benefits of clean hands before meals? Was the science of hand washing back then not as advanced as we have it today?

It is more likely that Jesus doesn’t have a problem with hand washing at all. In fact, he probably did it. The complaint made by the Pharisees in today’s Gospel passage is really about the difference between those who act in a certain way because it is supposed

to be done that way versus acting in a certain way because that is the way God calls us to live.

Although the Pharisees seem to be the “bad guys” in a lot of passages, they were actually a group of people who were trying to get people to return to the traditional practices of their faith. Jesus wants them to go further though—it is not just about having knowledge about the Scriptures and doing the ritual practices of the faith. These are good things to know and to do, but they must be grounded on the heart of God. In today’s passage, they judged some of Jesus’ followers by their outward actions, without knowing their heart. Jesus turns their attention to what is on the inside.

► **Have you ever felt like you weren’t “holy enough” to follow Jesus?**

► **Have you ever felt judged by others about your faith or have you judged another person’s level of holiness?**

Jesus does not scold his followers for their lack of religious observance. He knows their hearts. His teaching here invites the Pharisees (and us) to look deeper. What are the surface things that are distracting us? What is within our own hearts that is leading us away from Jesus?

What good is observing a religious ritual if it lacks heart? Jesus knows that his disciples and the Pharisees need both. Ritual isn’t inherently bad. It can remind us of what is important and help form us in the ways of God. This only works when we open our heart to act with intention and not mindlessly. Can you imagine singing a song to a loved one in a monotone voice, without the feeling of love, joy, or any emotion? Could a singer become famous without putting their heart and soul into a song? Probably not. Similarly, we are not just called to “do a ritual” but to mean it.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 22.

We care called to put meaning into our actions.

Holiness comes from living out the core values of our beliefs in faith, hope, and love.

We don't have to be perfect to follow Jesus.

Act on the Word

Ritual Reflection

For this activity, you will need each part of the Mass (listed below) written on a separate notecard. You will also need internet access (smartphones, tablets, etc.) for four groups.

This activity will help the young people identify the rituals of the Mass and reflect on their meaning. Begin by shuffling the parts of the Mass that you have written on notecards and then ask the large group to work together to put them in the correct order. Offer help if they are stuck on one of the parts. The correct order is as follows:

- * Entrance
- * Greeting
- * Penitential Act
- * Glory to God
- * Collect
- * First Reading
- * Responsorial Psalm
- * Second Reading
- * Gospel Acclamation and Gospel
- * Homily
- * Profession of Faith
- * Universal Prayer
- * Presentation of Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- * Prayer over the Offerings
- * Eucharistic Prayer

- * The Lord's Prayer
- * Sign of Peace
- * Lamb of God
- * Communion
- * Prayer after Communion
- * Optional Announcements
- * Greeting and Blessing
- * Dismissal

Once the parts have been put in order, divide the group into four small groups. Assign each group one of the overarching sections of the Mass: the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites. Using the webpage “Order of Mass” from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass>), have each group learn about the ritual parts that are within their section. As they learn about them, they should also discuss ways to more fully participate in them when they attend Mass. How can their hearts be open to the deeper meaning of the rituals? After a few minutes, have the small groups share what they learned and reflected on with the large group.

Closing Prayer

O God,
instill in all of those entrusted with sharing the
Gospel,
your wisdom and justice so that all generations
may come to know the heart of the Living Word,
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.