

Daily *Reflections*

The Divine Intervention

August 30, 2015

Scripture

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

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."

Our Scripture Reflection

Jesus goes after the religious leaders in today's Gospel passage because of their hypocrisy. They are nothing more than actors on the stage of life. They appear holy and pious on the outside but their hearts are corroded with filth. Jesus tells them that evil comes from within the heart and calls them (and us) to do some deep cleaning.

Food for your Journey

1. In 1974, the top college basketball player in the country was a young man by the name of Bill Walton. At six foot eleven, he dominated college basketball. He took his team, UCLA, to their third consecutive NCAA championship, and in his senior year went on to the NBA. Bill had some adjustments to make in the NBA, and he didn't make them very well. Then abruptly he left the game. He said his heart was no longer in his playing. After some time went by, Bill Walton came back. This time his heart was in his game, and he played like it. He led the Portland Trailblazers to their first NBA championship. Then he moved on to the Boston Celtics. Now he's a television basketball announcer. It makes all the difference in the world if your heart is in what you're doing! A lot of us are trying to live our lives with our hearts in nothing or, we should say, with nothing in our hearts. We have Christ on our lips, but he's never made that journey further down. That's why we are bored. How do we move Christ from our lips to our hearts? That is the question which today's Gospel asks us.

2. In many cities, you will get a ticket for speeding by mail, because photo radar vans sit beneath freeway underpasses snapping your picture as you speed by and the gun records your speed while the camera focuses on your license plate. Video cameras are popping up

everywhere, like virtual watching eyes. School districts are installing cameras in school buses to document for unbelieving parents how their children behave. YMCAs have mounted security cameras everywhere. Banks and businesses monitor the movements of suspected criminals and shop-lifters. With Webcams positioned strategically throughout the child-care center, parents can log on to the Internet to see what's happening with their babies. Buzzing along benignly through clear American skies, the Recon Spy Plane has a hidden, remote-controlled camera that can be activated from up to 1,000 feet away. All these are meant to force citizens to behave well. But we conveniently forget the truth that God has an all-seeing "Holycam" perched inside our souls enabling Him to see what is in our hearts and minds. We may get away with appearance-based virtual morality in society, fooling civil authorities, friends, spouse or children. But Jesus gives us a strong warning in today's Gospel: "Nothing that enters from outside can defile a person; but the things that come out from within are what defile" (Mark 7:15). Jesus is cautioning us not to be like some Pharisees who passed themselves off as pious, always performing the correct rites and keeping tradition-based observances, but whose inner lives were polluted with the stench of the graveyard.

Prayer from the Heart

Precious Lord, Please forgive and cleanse my heart of all that is unholy and impure so that I may humbly live as the person You created me to be. Amen.

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