



AMDG
22ND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
2ND SEPTEMBER 2018



You must do what the Word tells you

OPENING PRAYER

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.

After several weeks of reading St John's Gospel, we return once more to hearing St Mark. The focus this week is on the Law, and the tensions that can exist between the Commandments of God as fulfilled in Jesus and human traditions.

Of course, in the first place the Law was a gift from God to help us show wisdom and understanding, leading to our own happiness (*First Reading*).

The *Psalms* describes the person who will live in the presence of God. As God's children we must accept and submit to his word, not just in what we say, but also in what we do (*Second Reading*).

However, if the Law becomes a God in itself and leads the follower to be obsessed with its human interpretations, then the focus is no longer on the Lord at the centre of our life, and a change of heart is needed (*Gospel*).

This week, then, we might want to pray particularly for a greater balance in our lives between the Lord and his Word and a legalistic approach to life and its man-made institutions.

SECOND READING JAMES 1: 17–18, 21–22, 27

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.

I settle down to pray.

If I can, I light a candle to remind me of God's presence around me, within me.

I become aware of my breathing, perhaps breathing in God's love for me and breathing out any negative feelings.

When I am ready, I read the text, possibly several times.

Is there a phrase or expression which strikes me? I stop and ponder.

I ask the Lord to help me appreciate it fully.

Maybe I am led to reflect on the never-changing nature of God: '*no alteration, no shadow of a change*'.

How does that make me feel?

Reassured and comforted, trapped and imprisoned, or...?

What is my relationship to God's Word?

Do I simply pay lip service to it?

In what ways do my everyday actions mirror my acceptance and submission to it?

Perhaps some examples, recent or more distant, come to my mind.

I speak with the Lord about them and listen to what he says to me.

There may be no actual orphans or widows who need my help at the moment, but who are the people around me or further afield whom I might support, either actively or through prayer?

As I bring my prayer to a close, I ask the Lord to show me how I could follow his Word even more closely in everything I do or say.

Glory be to the Father ...

GOSPEL MARK 7: 1–8. 14–15. 21–23

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around 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 the 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 you from outside can make you unclean. For it is from within, from your 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 you unclean.’

I prepare myself to pray by trying to put some distance between my everyday activities and the time I am going to spend consciously in the presence of my loving God.

I do this in the manner that works best for me: attention to breathing, focus on a light or favourite object, repeat of a well-loved phrase from Scripture.

Eventually, I pick up the leaflet and read the text slowly, several times, pausing now and again when a phrase strikes me.

The Jews disagree with Jesus about the best way to prepare for a meal.

How do I prepare for encountering him at the Eucharistic meal?

What steps do I take to be physically and spiritually clean?

How much emphasis do I place ... on Church tradition?

... on the ‘commandment of God’?

I tell the Lord how I feel, and what is in my heart.

Perhaps I read again Jesus’s final response. I, too, want to ‘listen and understand’.

I search my heart. Once more I turn to the Lord and speak to him about my ponderings.

If necessary, I express my sorrow, trusting that he understands any weakness I struggle with.

Eventually, I close my prayer with my own words of gratitude.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

God of might, giver of every good gift,
put in my heart the love of your name.

Collect

Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain?
The one who walks without faults,
acts with justice and speaks the truth from their heart.

Psalm

You must do what the Word tells you,
not just listen to it and deceive yourself.

Second Reading

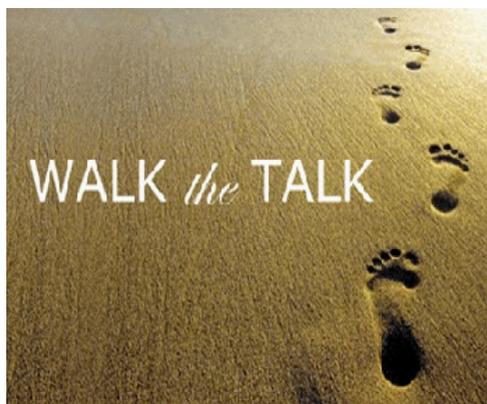
It is from within, from one's heart, that evil intentions emerge ...
[They] come from within and make one unclean.

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8; Psalm 14 (15);

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15. 21-23



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