

22nd ordinary Sunday



William Barclay in *The Daily Study Bible* tells the story of an old Jewish rabbi in the Roman prison diagnosed with acute dehydration which would have led to his death. The prison guards insisted that the rabbi had been given his quota of drinking water. So, the prison doctor and the officer in charge instructed the guards to watch the rabbi and ascertain what he was doing with his ration of water. They were shocked to find that the rabbi was using almost all his water for traditional ritual

washing before prayer and meals. — Today's Gospel tells us how the tradition-addicted Pharisees started questioning Jesus when his disciples omitted the ritual washing of hands in public before a meal.

Today's readings explain that true religion is not simply a scrupulous, external observance of rules, laws, traditions and rituals. It is, instead, a loving, obedient relationship with God expressed in obeying His Commandments, worshipping Him, recognizing His presence in other human beings and rendering them loving and humble service. Prayers, rituals, Sacraments, and religious practices are our God-given helps to practice this true religion in our daily lives.

The first reading explains that religion is a Covenant relationship with a caring, providing, and protecting God, fostered by keeping His Commandments given through Moses. God gave Israel the Law so that the Israelites might keep their Covenant with Yahweh and thank Him for His love and fidelity to His Chosen People. The Law was also intended to keep them a united, holy, and intelligent nation, proud of their powerful, protective, single God.

In the second reading, St. James defines true religion as keeping the word of God and doing His will by helping the needy, the poor, and the weak in the community. He challenges Christians to become doers of the word, not merely hearers.

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes true religion as serving God and all His children with a pure and holy heart. Sincerity of heart, internal disposition, purity, and holiness are more important than mere external ritual observances. 3) Keep your heart holy as it is the source of sins, vices and evil habits. The observance of traditions and of washing rituals does not correct the internal motivations and inclinations that really defile people. 4) External piety without internal holiness is hypocrisy. I have come not to abolish the law but to fulfill

Life messages:

1) We need to learn and keep the spirit of the Church's laws and **ritual** practices. For example, our Sunday obligation is intended to allow us to worship God in the parish community, to offer our lives to God, to ask His pardon for sins, to thank God for His blessings, and to receive Divine Life and strength from Him in Holy Communion. Our daily family prayers are meant to thank God for His blessings, to present the family's needs before God, to ask pardon for our sins, to maintain the spirit of unity and love in the family, and to keep a close relationship with God.

2) Let us avoid the tendency to become cafeteria Christians. As the Pharisees did, we, too, add to or subtract from God's laws given in the Bible and taught by the Church. Some of us pick and choose certain Commandments to follow, ignoring the others as we do food offerings in a cafeteria. For example, some actively do corporal and spiritual works of Charity, but avoid Sunday Mass. Others are interested in fulfilling only the "minimal obligations" of the Faith. They come to Mass late and leave early. They make an effort to avoid serious sins, but don't go to confession even when they fall into mortal sins.

3) Let us accept the challenge to become hearers and doers of God's word as St. James instructs us: Let us ask ourselves how the Sunday or daily readings are affecting or changing our lives. That will show us whether we are being attentive listeners to, and doers of, God's word. We become more fully Jesus' family members, only when we consistently "*hear the word of God and do it*" (Lk 8:21). When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion today, let us ask for the grace to become the doers of his word as Jesus was the doer of

Inspirational quote:

IT IS THE TRUTH REVEALED THROUGH SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION AND
ARTICULATED BY THE CHURCH MAGESTERIUM THAT SET US FREE

BENEDICT XVI