

Take 2 With Jesus

Daily Reflections on the Sunday Gospel

Week beginning Sunday 29th August.

Jesus confronts our sin.

This week's reflections are based on the Gospel reading for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Mk 7:1-8,14-15,21-23. Further reflections on this Gospel can be found at <http://www.prayasyoucan.com.au/sunday/show/597>.

Sunday

*Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem
gathered round Jesus.*

(Mk 7:1)

If this was a movie, dark and ominous music would now be playing. These people haven't come to learn or receive, but to judge. Later these 'religious' people will be the ones who bring about Jesus' death. Religion used well can open us to God, but it can also be used to justify the evil.

Loving Jesus, I know that in trying to be good, I can become judgmental. Free my heart of pride that I may truly offer your generous love.

Continue your prayer through this day by pondering on the different ways you have seen religion used.

Monday

*There were many other observances which had been handed down
concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes.
(Mk 7:4)*

Because religious faith is passed down through a community it is normal to accumulate observances. Often these have had a good basis when they came into being. But we need to regularly assess the good they may do. After all it is God we are to worship, not our observances. We should even assess how appropriate our personal observances are to our lives.

Loving Jesus, help me to realise that my religious practices are to be vessels carrying your love. When they no longer help, let me put them aside. Give me the wisdom to discover what does bring me close to you.

Continue your prayer through this day by noticing what brings you closer to God.

Tuesday

*Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus,
“Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders
but eat their food with unclean hands?”
(Mk 7:5)*

Jesus could have answered, ‘Because your traditions are largely irrelevant to them and reveal nothing about the love of God not give the salvation that they need.’ If we wish to offer the gift of faith, we have to be sensitive to where others need God and salvation in their lives. To discover this, we must first treat them with respect, not with condemnation.

Loving Jesus, help me to appreciate the diverse ways you come into people’s lives. Let me see what helps them find you, and what hinders.

Continue your prayer through this day by noticing the ways Jesus becomes present in my daily life.

Wednesday

*Jesus said,
‘This people honours me only with lip-service,
while their hearts are far from me.’
(Mk 7:6)*

Routine and repetition can be a boon in any aspect of our lives, but especially in the practice of our faith. Because God is unseen, we need things and practices to remind us of the divine presence but they can also be a real danger. If we are just going through the motions, our hearts can drift and we can become insensitive to God. We are oblivious to this because our practice can delude us into thinking we are good.

Loving Jesus, keep my heart alive to your presence, especially when I pray. You know I struggle to remain connected to your unseen presence. Send me your Spirit to lift my spirit when it flags.

Continue your prayer through this day by trying to say short prayers, very short prayers with attention.

Thursday

*Jesus said,
‘You put aside the commandments of God and cling to human traditions.’
(Mk 7:8)*

In the area of faith, human traditions are easy to live with – they make us feel good and comfortable, and if we do them well, we can look down on others. The commandments of God, though, make us uncomfortable for they make us face the evil in our own hearts.

Loving Jesus, give me the courage to truly use your commandments to realise my neediness. As I recognise this, may I know you as my loving Saviour.

Continue your prayer through this day by asking yourself what commandments of God make you feel uncomfortable.

Friday

Jesus said,

*'Nothing that goes into a person can make them unclean.
It is what comes out of a person that makes them unclean.'*
(Mk 7:15)

"They made me do it." "I couldn't help it, circumstances led me into it." Jesus would have no truck with excuses like this. Jesus, the most understanding and compassionate of Saviours, still makes us face the evil that is within us - not to condemn us but because he knows that we can be so much better living by his love. If we reflect on what we do and say, we will discover the sin that Jesus himself wishes to take from us.

Loving Jesus, you know my weakness and evil better than I do myself. Let your kind Spirit guide me in the ways of truth and give me the courage to face my own neediness. May your love and strength enfold me whenever I fall.

Continue your prayer through this day by reflecting on your words and actions, pondering what they tell you about your heart.

Saturday

Jesus said,

'For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions emerge.'
(Mk 7:21)

Well, that's telling us straight! And Jesus gives it to us even straighter: he gives a list of evil tendencies. It is worth looking up and asking ourselves, 'what evil tendencies do I have?' Jesus wants us to face these, not to condemn, but to free us from them.

Loving Jesus, you know the state of my heart even more than I do. Give me the humility and courage this day to face, in some way, my evil tendencies. Where sin exists, may your grace abound even more.

Continue your prayer through this day by recognising and naming one area of sin in your life and asking Jesus to heal you there