



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

1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, **2** and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. **3** 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; **4** 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. **5** So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' **6** 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. **7** The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations." **8** You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions.' **14** He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. **15** Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean ; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. **21** For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, **22** adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. **23** All these things come from within and make a man unclean.'

Other readings: Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8 Psalm 14 (15) James 1:17-18,21-22,27

Our gospel passage contains an account of a dispute between Jesus and the religious leaders, some of whom had come from Jerusalem, seemingly to investigate his teaching. The first focus of the argument is on the meaning of 'tradition' and the importance that should be given to it. The evangelist explains how various religious practices had built up over time. The challenge of Jesus is that such human practices can sometimes obscure the deeper demands of faith.

Jesus goes on to speak of the importance of what lies in our hearts. From a clean heart goodness will come forth. External observances, which have their own importance, can sometimes distract us from the real work on our hearts and minds.

Do I value the good traditions which have been passed on to me, or do I belittle them as 'not moving with the times'?

Am I determined to purify my inner motives and the things of the heart, rather than cloak them in external camouflage?

We thank God for the gifts of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church and the living tradition of faith.

We pray for sound judgement and good discernment.