



August 29, 2021

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Dt 4:1-2, 6-8

Jas 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

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

Law Versus Values

That is a very difficult choice to place before people. Why can't we choose both? Actually, that is the ideal.

Law is a legislated way that a group lives out a value. We value safe highways, and so we legislate traffic regulations, speed limits, and so forth. We value communal prayer, and so we devise liturgical calendars and worship ceremonies. Usually, the way we live out a value changes more frequently than the value itself. However, it often happens that people become so attached to a custom or law, though unfamiliar with the underlying value it embodies, that a change of custom becomes very disruptive. This certainly happened in the Church after the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the 1960s.

This seems to be the source of tension in today's Gospel scene. Washing hands before eating was a ritual custom here, not just a hygienic one. It probably originated with priests who bloodied their hands while sacrificing animals. Eventually, ritual washing became one of the 613 customs that Pharisees expected every Jewish man to observe. Referred to as "a hedge around the law," such customs served to ensure the law itself was protected and would not be broken. Jesus' disciples did not observe this ritual, and so they were criticized.

Jesus immediately came to their defense. He did not disparage the value of appropriate ritual behavior. Rather, he accused his opponents of clinging to out-of-date practices while disregarding underlying values. Practices are external; values are internal. Laws and customs can change; fundamental principles and standards endure.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

[Jesus said,]

"Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile."

MARK 7:15



FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *Do you have a favorite religious practice? The rosary? Communal singing? What religious value does it reflect?*

Dear Padre,

I recently had a spirited discussion with a Protestant friend regarding Romans 8:26. He believes his “perfected prayer of being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues” is addressed in that verse. What does the Church say about this verse?

Romans 8:26 says, “In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.”

I’d be careful not to interpret this passage too narrowly and limit its application only to the gift of speaking in tongues. In fact, its application is much broader and actually can be applied to all Christian prayer.

When it comes to praying effectively, all of us can use some extra help. We get that help from the Holy Spirit. Scripture scholar Joseph A. Fitzmayer, SJ, maintains that the Holy Spirit actually plays an active and dynamic role in helping Christians pray effectively by interceding on his or her behalf. In effect, the Holy Spirit expresses for us the inaudible prayers and groaning of our hearts, for which we have no words. So, when we pray, the Holy Spirit is actually present to us and makes up for what we are lacking in our prayer due to our own human weakness.

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Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

Let us try asking ourselves: Am I open to the action of the Holy Spirit?...This is a prayer we must pray every day: “Holy Spirit, make my heart open to the word of God, make my heart open to goodness, make my heart open to the beauty of God every day.”

GENERAL AUDIENCE, MAY 15, 2013

Calendar

Monday

AUGUST 30

Weekday

1 Thes 4:13–18

Lk 4:16–30

Tuesday

AUGUST 31

Weekday

1 Thes 5:1–6, 9–11

Lk 4:31–37

Wednesday

SEPTEMBER 1

Weekday

Col 1:1–8

Lk 4:38–44

Thursday

SEPTEMBER 2

Weekday

Col 1:9–14

Lk 5:1–11

Friday

SEPTEMBER 3

*St. Gregory the Great,
Pope and Doctor
of the Church*

Col 1:15–20

Lk 5:33–39

Saturday

SEPTEMBER 4

Weekday

Col 1:21–23

Lk 6:1–5

Sunday

SEPTEMBER 5

*Twenty-third Sunday in
Ordinary Time*

Is 35:4–7a

Jas 2:1–5

Mk 7:31–37

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