



"Allowing the Lord to soak us and wash us clean in the hot waters of correction and contrition, so as to shine as pure and clean children of God!"

The words of Jesus in today's gospel reading are part of the response to the experts in the Jewish Law who criticize Jesus' disciples for 'eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them'. This failure to follow the washings prescribed was considered to make someone ritually unclean. They attached greater importance to external cleanliness over internal purity. They accorded higher priority to hygiene outside than to transparency within. They would not bother, hearts being corrupted, but they would not tolerate dirty hands. They would despise unwashed hands, but they would bypass filthy hearts.

But Jesus is in prime opposition to all such deceitful and corrupt human practices. He flays the Scribes and Pharisees for their misplaced priorities. He slams the Scribes and Pharisees for their misleading interpretation of purity. And so, Jesus summoned the crowd and explained what is the meaning of real cleanliness and purity:

The Pharisees and the Scribes for a long time, had enforced importance only to external purity and outside cleanliness. Their authority was used to stamp the importance of rituals and traditions, which were meant to only emphasize bodily cleaning, but avoiding transparency in life, only highlight cleansing of external parts, but **overlooking sanctity of heart and mind.**

Jesus comes in great opposition and places things in the right perspective. He reminds them of the "need for correction!" Perhaps, we are also in "need of a correction" let us therefore make a self-introspection:

I may be appearing to be clean outside but is my heart pure and holy?. I may be appearing to be an angel to the world but am I a barn of devilish actions within? I may be appearing to be very good to all but am I full of anger, jealousy and greed inside? I may be appearing to be successful but am I decaying interiorly with impurity and deceit?

Is it not time to cleanse my heart and life, which is perhaps defiled with sin? impure with unhealthy thoughts? and stained with evil intentions?

The heart is the inner core of the person and we know that our inner core can have both its light and its shade; it can be a reservoir for good and for harm. One of the great traditional images of our faith in the past has been the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many of us may have grown up with an image of the Sacred Heart in our homes. It was an image which declared that at God's inner core was a totally selfless love, a love that was revealed fully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This greater love was powerfully creative and life-giving. Our calling is to have hearts that in some sense reflect the Sacred Heart, to have an inner core that partakes in some way of God's inner core. We must guard the thoughts, judgements, values, ideas, and opinions we hold in our hearts! As Christians, we must measure what we hold in our hearts with the teachings of Jesus. Let us co-operate with the Lord in "being washed" of every bit of corruption and malice from our hearts!

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, give me the grace to keep working on my inner core and allow You to keep working on it. I ask You to keep on renewing my heart so that it corresponds more to Your heart.

Jesus, I Trust In You