



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 2nd September 2018

In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights

Keynote: Be true to the word of God

Book of Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8

This text presents us with a solemn proclamation by Moses to the People of Israel – assembled to hear God's word. Moses urges them: *'Now take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today and observe them, that you may have life.'* This assembly of the people may well have been a liturgical gathering for a formal reading of the Law and the Prophets. Not unlike our own liturgical assembly, when the church gathers to listen to God's word. *'You must keep the commandments of the Lord God just as I have laid them down for you,'* says Moses. God speaks to us today too through the words that follow: *'Keep them, observe them, and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding.'* God's Law is something to treasure and to value, to be true to God's word and to value the law and community customs given first to the People of the Old Covenant.

Responsorial Psalm 14 (15): 2-5 – A song of the just person on entering God's holy place

Letter of James 1: 17-18, 21-22, 27

The author of this letter gets straight to the point! *'Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and it can save your souls.'* On its own, simply to hear the word, is not enough. Instead, it is necessary *'to accept, and to submit to God's word'*. The apostle James urges us, *'you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.'* The practical outcomes of such true religion, he tells us, will be shown by your *'coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.'* So the effect of truly listening and taking to heart God's word is to be shown in a practical way by the love and care we show for others. That is a practical test each of us may apply for ourselves!

Gospel according to Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

In every human society there are those who concentrate on outward appearances. The 'being holier than thou society' who deceive themselves and try to deceive others, pretending that they alone act and behave correctly. Clearly, those same sorts of folk lived in Jesus' day! The reference to the ritual, *'on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves,'* only serves to underline what Jesus is saying, what an empty gesture that sprinkling really was? Jesus is urging us not to become the *'hypocrite'* – the one who wears the false mask pretending to be other than what is real. So the attempt by the Pharisees to publicly discredit Jesus provides him with an opportunity. He explains to the disciples that fidelity to merely human regulations is less important than fidelity to the word of God. Jesus called the people to him and said, *'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. 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. For it is from within... that evil intentions emerge.'* All of us then, are invited to 'get real' and to be true to the inner reality of Christian living, and to respond personally to the word of God.

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