

Small Groups

Discussion Questions for August 30, 2015 – Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

The First Reading from Deuteronomy seems to be in opposition to the Gospel reading this week. In the Old Testament reading, God, through the divinely-inspired author, commands us to “hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you,” observe “the commandments of the Lord,” “you shall not add to what I command you nor shall you subtract from it,” and “observe them carefully.” The Pharisees in the Gospel seem to be wondering why Jesus and his followers do not also follow the laws, as God handed them down. The Pharisees were experts at keeping the law. In fact, the Pharisees have about 2,000 years of history and literature to back them up. So what is really going on here? Is Jesus flouting the Word of God? Is that even possible, being God incarnate? The whole point of these two readings is that Jesus is saying that it is not the observance of human laws that does anything for our salvation, but those things that come out of us that determine who we are and where we’re going. The Pharisees were taking God’s word out of context and demanding strict adherence to verses they took literally when God meant them in the spiritual sense. Jesus is saying that we must attend to the cleansing of our thoughts, intents, and desires. Once that’s done, the things coming out of us will be clean and pleasing to God.

Discussion Questions

1. If you’re comfortable doing this, each person should present one prayer request of the Group.
2. Read the Second Reading aloud. Repeat the last sentence, emphasizing the first word, “religion.” Explain what you think this sentence means in terms of your religious beliefs and practices.
3. In the Gospel, Jesus has some harsh words for the Pharisees. Why does he speak in such an “unchristian” manner to them? Jesus never speaks this way to the poor, the widows, the prostitutes, the orphaned? Why is that? Why doesn’t he speak like this to sinners?
4. Since these readings are so integral to our faith and the way we live our lives, spend the remainder of your time together discussing what St. James’ words mean to us “Be doers of the word and not hearers only”.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, Father Almighty. Watch over us. Help us. Give us an understanding of your will for our lives. We praise you and thank you for all the gifts you give us. Sometimes we don’t always recognize those simple things in our lives that you provide. Let us see your hand in everything, even the mundane. You know what we go through each day and you know our needs. Help us to see you in the answers whether we like it or not. Everything works to your good. Enable us to be an instrument of your love and peace this day and all the days of our life. We ask all of this in your holy and pure name. Amen.

“My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Jas 2:1-5)