

Tuesday's Gospel: A Life of Service

Gospel for Tuesday in the 2nd Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 23:1-12*)

Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their

phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Commentary

In the Gospel passage that the Church invites us to consider today, our Lord harshly criticizes the

scribes and Pharisees whose actions are guided by external appearances, instead of striving to live in accord with the truth.

At times our Lord's strong words against hypocrites have led some people to describe Jesus as a "revolutionary" who rebelled against the practices he was denouncing.

But our Lord had no intention of abolishing the Law taught by the scribes and Pharisees (cf. *Mt* 5:17). Rather he wanted to purify it and bring it to its fullness. In contrast to those who "preach, but do not practice" and "want the place of honor," Jesus teaches us that Christians are called to serve others and humble ourselves. And Jesus not only says this, but ratifies his words with his death on the Cross.

Christian, as disciples of Christ, must seek ways to serve and not human acclaim. It is this perspective,

expressed in deeds, that is truly revolutionary about Christ's message. His words can't remain merely a theory, but need to be given life in a thousand small details each day.

With his life and his words our Lord is preparing us to welcome the gift of Easter. A continuous attitude of service and self-giving is the best way to open our hearts to grace.

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