

Wednesday's Gospel: Reversing the Direction

Gospel for Wednesday in the
5th Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 7:14-23)

And he called the people to him again, and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him.”

And when he had entered the house, and left the people, his disciples

asked him about the parable. And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

And he said, “What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.”

Commentary

Our day and age seems to be the era of diets. It is difficult to believe that at any other time in history, books on

healthy nutrition and correct eating habits would have had such a high sales rate as they do today.

This can certainly be considered progress. Scientific and medical advances have led to an increasingly more detailed knowledge of the human body, what is good for its health and what is bad. This knowledge has improved the physical health and quality of life of many people.

But we might ask: how many of those people who dedicate money, time and effort to maintaining their body, are dedicating at least the same resources to maintaining their soul? Do they at least try to read books that guide them in this area?

In this Gospel passage, which is the continuation of the one we read yesterday, Jesus is trying to help the people listening to focus on what is truly important. At that time, due to

the influence of the Pharisees, there was great concern above all for “ritual purity,” which included the prohibition of a whole series of foods that could defile a person.

However, our Lord wants people to realize that we need to reverse the direction of this movement: it is not from the outside in that the soul is stained; rather uncleanness stems from the inside out.

At times we may have the tendency to put emphasis on the environment around us: advertising, friends’ conversations, the negative influence of some media. But Jesus insists that the first thing we must direct our gaze towards in every examination of conscience is our own heart. Do we know how to cut out of our diet whatever could stain our soul? Do we know how to purify the source of sin that is our own interior world?

It is worthwhile asking ourselves if we make at least the same effort to have a clean heart as we do to have a healthy body. To achieve this, staying close to Mary Most Holy Mary is very helpful. The one who is all-pure will clean away with her maternal love all those evil things that come from within and make a person unclean. And she will lead us along the path of contrition.

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