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Tuesday's Gospel: Acting Only for Love

Gospel for Tuesday of the 21st
Week in Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 23:23-26*)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Commentary

Today’s Gospel passage is part of the “discourse of Woes” in which Jesus stresses the serious consequences of a merely external fulfillment of the Law. Two descriptive words keep reappearing here: “blind” and “hypocrites.” A hypocrite is someone who says one thing and does another; he behaves like an actor in real life. And a hypocrite’s heart can easily become blind. He adapts his way of viewing the world to his

personal circumstances and needs, which leads to blindness.

The scribes and Pharisees perform external actions such as paying the tithe and cleaning the outside of the cup and plate, but they do this to be seen by others. Their inner motive is selfish. They don't act out of love or mercy, which are the heart of the Law and determine the value of external actions.

In God's eyes, the interior has primacy over the exterior. Our external actions are a consequence of our inner motives. We become saints by purifying our intentions, striving to choose well, fostering the desire to love God above all things. Therefore what we do externally stems from the heart. That is why what we first need to change is our heart. Pope Francis said: "The boundary between good and evil does not pass outside of us, but

rather within us. We could ask ourselves: where is my heart? Without a purified heart, one cannot have truly clean hands and lips that speak sincere words of love, of mercy, of forgiveness. Only a sincere and purified heart can do this.”^[1] —

This Gospel is also relevant for our own lives. We can ask ourselves: what is the real reason why I carry out this action? Am I acting out of love for God and others, or for my own personal satisfaction? Saint Josemaría encouraged us “when one sincerely loves God, there is no reluctance in one’s self-giving, in the love that is expressed in a thousand daily details. And when one loves truly, one’s self-giving is joyful, without keeping count and without seeking gratitude. The opportunity to give oneself gladly is all that person seeks!”^[2] — Let us ask our Mother Holy Mary to help us always act out of love for God and our neighbor.

^[1] Francis, Angelus, 30 August 2015.

^[2] *Memoria del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*. Javier Echevarria. p. 52.

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