

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 1, 2024: Dt 4:1-2,6-8 | Ps 15:2-5 (1a)
| Jas 1:17-18,21b-22,27 | Mk 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

Pray: Jesus, help me grow in holiness with a pure heart and a faithful, charitable life. Amen.

What matters most to Jesus is our inner purity and our love in action.

The Pharisees were a group of pious, law-observant Jews who tried hard to maintain the purity of Jewish traditions by avoiding contact with impure pagan cultural influences of the time. They practiced strict purification rituals, observed special dietary restrictions, and held themselves and others firmly to their faith's rigid traditions and practices.

They were known for their expectations of personal piety, and their leaders were sticklers for adherence to all 600-plus laws in the Torah. The leaders of this Jewish sect were very devout, and they sincerely believed their devotional customs and traditions honored God.

However, their long list of dos and don'ts was often judgmental of others, and they frequently clashed with how Jesus preferred to do things. Jesus tried to show them many times that they were missing the point of what God desires most of us: love in action and the purity of our hearts.

The center of Christ's teachings revolves around two things: love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus is most interested in the love



and purity of our hearts, our humility and compassion, and our faith in action shown in our sincere love and kindness to others.

When it comes to purification, rather than picking at someone else's flaws, Jesus wants us to look inward to discover our own sins and work to unplug the channels of grace in our relationship with Him. The bottom line is that we must rid our hearts of anything that is not of God, who is love itself.

Reflect & Discuss:

- † Is there anything in your life blocking the entire flow of grace God wants to give you to reach the potential that He sees in you?
- † How is God calling you to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only?
- † What traditions and habits can sometimes distract people from true faith, and how?
- † How can we nurture our inner spiritual lives to keep our faith pure and holy against worldly temptations?