

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time -B -2018
Duet. 4.1-2,6-8///James 1.17-22///Mark 7.1-8,14-15,21-23

→at a meeting of the executive board of one of leading producers of dog food

→the CEO of the company angrily chastised the Board of Directors

→“I don’t understand” he shouted as he pounded on the table.... “our sales are slumping///our product is staying on the shelves///and yet I have been told we have the best dog food in business///we have the most skillful team of nutritionists and experts....///...our art department has designed award-winning labels on our cans.....our advertising people are second to none in aggressive marketing campaigns

→"so why....I ask.....why are sales down///can anyone tell me?"....[he demanded]

→well as you might expect there was complete silence around table, with everyone looking downward....wilting under chairman’s stare

→[and] finally, from way in the back of room, a voice piped up: “I have an answer....the reason sales are down is that the dogs don't like the food that’s inside the can”

→now.....that modern business scene is very similar to what’s happening in today's gospel, only in the gospel were are not talking about dog food, but instead talking about religion and faith

→[however].....in both cases, [the point is that] what really matters is the **quality** of what’s on the inside.....in the case of the dog food...what’s matters is what is in the can

→and in the case of our faith....what matters is what is in our heart

PAUSE

→our gospel reading today focuses on the inner qualities of Jesus' teaching.....THAT
GOODNESS COMES from within and not from unimportant externals

→and I believe that the message J. is conveying is quite simple

→our readings today speak basically of 2 different types of religion...two kinds of faith:

→the first type is what I like to call: "the camouflage religion/faith"

→and the second 2nd. type is " a religion of the heart" ... "a faith of true belief"

→and what Jesus is doing is describe the first type....this "camouflage" religion as speaks to
Pharisee's and the "experts" in the law.....

→they are questioning why the disciples do not follow rules as scrupulously as they should

→and Christ replies to their questions by quoting Isaiah the prophet, who described such
people as paying "lip service" to God, giving "empty reverence" to God and paying more
attention to human traditions rather than God's commandments

---i.o.w. they camouflaged their true way of living w/empty words and actions

---likewise in 2nd reading James chastises those who hear the word but don't act on it, thus
deceiving themselves...as he writes "be doers of the word and not hearers only"

→on the other hand..... ----the 2nd type...the "religion of the heart" comes from acting on the
word of God, and living the message of Christ in a way that is real, authentic and sincere

PAUSE

→and to know whether we are living a "camouflage Christianity" or "Christianity of the heart"
or for that fact a "camouflage life" or "life from the heart"

-----we must be willing to honestly challenge ourselves, in the same way Christ is challenging the Pharisee's in today's gospel

→no one knows what is truly in our hearts except ourselves and God

→and today's gospel reading make the very same point

→because what it is saying to us is that.....that our faith...our beliefs...our religion is not something we can only do, or invoke, or participate only when we want to

→it's not about observing certain laws, or saying certain prayers, or performing certain rituals....[on the contrary]...it has to be much much more than that

→yet unfortunately.....that is what many people in the time of Jesus had turned religion into...and sometimes that is what many today do as well

→how often do we try to make our beliefs, our morals, our decisions...our faith fit into what we want them to be rather than what they truly are....

→i.o.w. how often do we try to make God...and the Church...and our faith fit into our expectations rather than having our faith and our beliefs fit into God's expectations.

→and Christ points this out bluntly...when we hear about the Pharisee's being ONLY worried about whether their hands are clean and the bowls are clean....PAUSE

→I believe, the message Jesus is trying to get across to the people of the Gospel and to you and me is that our faith, our beliefs, our practices and the way we live our Christian lives can't be camouflaged into something we do at certain times on certain days.....

→instead, what we are being told is that true, genuine, authentic faith is something that is truly of the heart....that needs to come from and be rooted in the very core of our being, from our

very soul...and the rituals, our participation in the Church, our outward signs validate, and make real the priority we place upon our faith.....PAUSE

→today's scripture readings are inviting us to determine.....to what extent do the words of Jesus in the gospel passage apply to me today.

----because today we are being challenging to look into our hearts, into our souls and examine our relationship to God and to each other and to determine exactly what priority does God, does the Church, does our faith have in our lives.

→...to seriously look inward at ourselves and ask ourselves some important and serious questions like

----how might I become a more authentic, honest human being

----how might I better my relationship to God and to my friends

----with what attitudes do I approach the church...and Sunday mass...each week [does what I do and the way I think when I am here at the Eucharist...sincerely reflect what I think of others and myself?]

----how am I doing in the relationships in my life, with my spouse, with my family, with my friends.

----is my anger towards others justified

----how easy it for me to say I am sorry

---do I care only about those who care about me, or only about those I can benefit from

→[you see]----these are hard, painful and frightening questions to ask

→but these are the questions that count...and more importantly what counts are the answers we give to them....

----to challenge ourselves...about what is truly important to me...is what Christ is speaking to us about today, and its not easy to do

→but when we do do it, when we embrace it, and more importantly when we truly face and live the answers set before us....it is then that we begin to live the life of Christ...it is then that our faith takes on meaning and it is then that we truly live as Christ is asking us to

→[in the end] //// when it comes to our faith in God, in the Church and in each other

→we can camouflage ourselves in the most personal piety, on our knees everyday...reciting prayer after prayer

→we can camouflage ourselves with the most righteous of attitudes...fighting for justice, and morality, and standing up for what's right

→and we can camouflage ourselves with the holiest of intentions

but if it's not real, if it's not authentic...if it does have root and come to life from our heart, from our soul

→ then we are no better than the Pharisee's who worried about clean hands and clean bowls

→and in the end, the only one you are fooling is yourself.