

Church of the Divine Love
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
PROPER 17
SEPTEMBER 1, 2024 9:00 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung)

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9**

Psalm 15

Second Lesson: **James 1:17-27**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)	
The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer B	page 367
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday September 1st, 2024

Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-9; Psalm 15; James 1: 17-27; Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

Beloved in Christ,

If you were blessed to be raised in a decently stable environment, chances are there were things that you did that became tradition. And the meaning of these traditions was deeper than the action itself. Do you know what I mean? What are some of the traditions you had growing up that were particularly meaningful?

I grew up in Haiti, and in Haiti, the practice of offering hot drinks to visitors is a cultural tradition. Whether you're visiting someone in a city, chances are good that you will be given a hot drink. The hot drink has nothing to do with temperature. It has nothing to do with caffeine. It really doesn't even have to do with being thirsty. In Haiti, hot drinks are a sign of hospitality and community. They're a sign of relationship and respect. I didn't realize how deeply this tradition had impacted me until I came to another country one summer and stayed with some friends...and in the two weeks I was with them, they never once offered me a hot drink. I remember being somewhat offended and even a little judgmental

of them, how could they not have offered me a hot drink. Never mind that they were feeding me every day, sharing their home and life with me. Does this happen to you? Please tell me I'm not the only one who has drawn unfortunate judgments about people who do things differently, or at least don't do things the same as I was raised to do them. Are there behaviors and traditions that are important to you, that have a way of showing up as unspoken expectations of other people? How about in the church? Does this happen in the church? Are there things we do in the church that have become about more than the action, such that we end up using them to evaluate what that other person or group is doing wrong?

In the Gospel reading today, the religious leaders criticize Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands before eating. This is clearly about more than just a concern for their hygiene. For the Pharisees, this is about tradition, faithfulness, respect and honor. And we're not just talking about running hands under water with soap. The ritual washing was a whole routine that was about spiritual and ceremonial cleanliness...something that's hard to draw a parallel to today. Maybe think about when you were a kid and were about to go into your grandma's house, or into some other important place, and your mom would make you spit out your gum, tighten up your collar, straighten your skirt, smooth out your hair. Washing hands was about being presentable before God. And the commitment to the ritual came from a deep desire to be faithful to God and respectful of the cultural and religious tradition of honoring the faith and the elders. It came from a good place, right? There's some value in respecting and appreciating the rituals and traditions of the community elders. But when it became something used to draw lines between the insider and outsider, and when it became the measuring stick for faithfulness and loyalty to God, Jesus was compelled to call them out on it with some pretty harsh language. And while it's easy for us to read this text and point out the judgmental nature of the Pharisees, Jesus' response cautions us to be aware of our own tendencies to this kind of behavior. It's not the washing or not of washing hands that determines your faithfulness, Jesus says. It's what's in your heart.

In Deuteronomy, where a lot of these rules and traditions were established, we read over and over again that the purpose of the law is to point to God's faithfulness, and to tell the story of God's action in their history. Obedience and adherence to the law was a way of celebrating the relationship they had with God, a relationship that was unique to their community because they felt God was close enough to call on any time they wanted. Obedience was not the thing that created the relationship. Obedience to the law was a response to the relationship that God chose and initiated. In James we read another passage that can sound like "works are what makes you right before God." But that's not what's being said. If Jesus says in Mark that cleanliness or uncleanness is an internal matter of the heart, and not related to what you eat or whether you wash your hands, then James is saying that the reflection of your internal faithfulness is your external behavior. Offering tea to a guest does not in itself make me hospitable and caring. But if I claim to be hospitable and caring, but never actually open my home or life to others, then there's not much to my claim, does that make sense? Our actions and behavior do not dictate the condition of our hearts, but our actions and behavior do reflect the conditions of our hearts.

We might consider where, in our own relationship with God, we claim an internal commitment to

things like justice, care for neighbor, or spiritual maturity but when we look at our external life, those commitments don't show up in our behavior. And I hope that you find opportunity over the next week for your own reflection and conversation around these things. But here's what I want you to ponder. First, what are the traditions and rituals that are particularly meaningful to you as you reflect on God's participation in your life? What are those things that you do or that are done in community that most deeply speak to you about your faith? And second, are there ways that we use external behaviors to draw lines that unnecessarily exclude others? Are there ways that we create unspoken expectations on what faithfulness to God and this community look like that can result in casting judgment on those who don't conform? And finally, how is God inviting you to share the power of love and grace and all those things that you've been given by God through faith in Christ with those around you?

Our traditions and rituals tell stories about our values, about our history, about our gratitude for God's faithfulness. But they do not limit or define God's faithfulness and action. And these traditions are not meant to be used as measuring sticks of others' faithfulness, or as weapons to exclude or criticize those who do things differently. We could have the most liturgically, historically, and theologically precise tradition of worship and welcome, where we sing, process, preach, kneel, pray and proclaim God's love for all. But none of that matters if we're not actually loving God and loving others. None of that matters if we're not actually in relationship with God and neighbor. None of that matters if we're pointing fingers and casting judgment on others.

These texts today invite us to both an internal and external inventory of our attitude and behaviors. Let me be clear, all of these texts today have to do with responding to God and showing up in the world. None of them have to do with our salvation. God's love and grace is a gift to us that is free, even when we are hypocrites who get caught up in religion and spend too much time worrying about who has gone through the appropriate rituals. God's invitation to come to the Table and be filled by the gift of forgiveness and life is for all of us, even if we haven't washed our hands or shared a hot drink with a visitor. As we seek to grow in our love for God and love for neighbor, may we be ready to let go of the structures, maybe even the traditions, that keep us from all that God has for us as God's people, gathered by the Holy Spirit, called through the waters of baptism, and sent out to the world with a message of grace and love for all people. **Amen.**

248th Diocesan Convention will be held November 8, 2024

Delegate needed.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, PROPER 17

9:00 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

(also on zoom)

COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, PROPER 18

10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
	COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Sister Eddie	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
John Mulligan	John Rocco	Evelyn
Manetta Family	Donna A.	Kristen
Christopher	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Danielle	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Beverly Noel	Aidan

Sally & Roger	Sophia	Ciara
Mary & Family	Ann Turco	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Michael & Family	Matthew Treasure	Mo
Michelle & Baby	Marjorie Guerrier	Joseph

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

To add or make changes to prayer list during the week, email
Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart, and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,

Lay my life before you,

How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and forever. Amen

