

(Food for thought)

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

'From the Heart'



We tend to think of “spirituality” as a practice or a pursuit reserved for a very few elitist of souls. We think of the lucky ones who have the extra time (and money) to pray more, meditate daily, go to special retreats, or read books on the subject. Most of us would claim our lives are far too busy at this time for “spiritual pursuits.”

A healthy spirit can make us energetic and vibrant people with a hopeful outlook and a sense of life’s possibilities for the good. It can energize us to face the most intractable of social ills and not be discouraged. It can prevent us from giving up when we don’t get immediate results. A neglected spirit causes disintegration, sours how we look at our lives, turns us cynical, and leaves us with a narrowness of vision that isolates us from others.

Jesus isn’t rejecting ritual practice, but is reminding us that ritual is meaningless if it does not flow from an upright heart. In the biblical view, the heart is the center of our life. The heart is a figure for the spiritual life of a person. Here can be found a person’s deepest truths, most tightly guarded secrets. It is the heart that reveals our true identity. Because the heart is so profoundly identified with the person, so much the seat of one’s identity, it is only God who can change a person’s heart.

The grace of our gospel today is to awaken our hearts from their drowsiness and distractions and to stir us to examine the sincerity of our religious observances. Do our lives and our choices reflect the same sensitivity to the poor and disenfranchised as did Jesus’? Or, are we using “religion” as insulation from the world around us?

Christ is the source of our hearts’ renewal, starting at our weekly Eucharist. But after we gather together each week and then leave our parish churches to resume our lives, how else have we tended to the renewal of our hearts? Whom else have we allowed to touch our hearts with their need, longing for love or desire for forgiveness?

We cannot let ourselves get in the way of Christ — His teaching, His goodness, His redemption, or His love.

