

Sunday Readings Reflections of 8/30/15

Reading 1 Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

Some people cringe when they see words like "laws" and "commandments." They see regulations of any kind as a burden. However, as Moses prepares to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, he reminds them of the true purpose of God's commandments. By obeying God's law, the people will live in harmony with him and with each other. Other nations will marvel at their wisdom and envy their close relationship with God.

The Commandments and God's law of love are to be cherished and obeyed by all believers. We do not pick and choose which commands are easy for us to follow. Out of love, we observe the whole law that God has given us.

Reading 2 James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

At every Mass we hear the word of the Lord proclaimed. But if the word we hear does not get translated into action, it is like a seed that gets blown away rather than planted in good soil. Saint James reminds us in his letter that we are to be doers of the word, not just hearers. Those who take the word of God to heart and act on it will care for orphans and widows, the poor and the homeless, the hungry and the sick.

True worship is not a matter of simply going to Mass or saying prayers. It is a matter of acting on the word that has been planted in us by God.

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

The word "hypocrite" comes from an ancient Greek term meaning "actor." In today's gospel story, Jesus accuses the religious leaders of being hypocrites. They act as though they are speaking for God but they are really speaking about what matters to them. Jesus points out that they are more concerned about pious practices than they are about God's commandments. They criticized Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands before eating. But they showed no interest in the goodness of the disciples' hearts.

Jesus teaches that religious rules and regulations should never become more important than God's people. He wants us to understand that our outward behavior should reflect what is in our hearts. A good heart will not produce evil actions. Nor will washing our hands make us clean inside where it really counts.