August 29, 2021

Written by THE FAITHFUL DISCIPLE

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dt 4:1-2, 6-8 | Jas 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27 | Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

As I began reading the Gospel for today, I initially thought, "Here we go - those hypocritical Pharisees are at it again! They are always questioning Jesus, always judging others, and always looking for ways to make themselves look 'holier' than everyone else." Uh oh; then I realized that I was feeling pretty smug as I judged the Pharisees! Sadly, it can be easy for me to fall into a "Pharisee attitude," thinking I "walk blamelessly and do justice" when really I am just deluding myself. While Jesus uses this encounter to point out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he also calls the crowd to a greater understanding of the source of evil in their lives, "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts." Maybe I need to hear these words, too, and examine my own thoughts and actions before judging others.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

St. James provides an answer to combating the evil we discover in our hearts: "Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls." The Word, Jesus, came to us and has given us the way to free ourselves from the evil within. Our relationship with him is the key. We know we are to "be doers of the word and not hearers only." We have the Holy Spirit to help us stay close to him and access his saving power that transforms our hearts to reflect his goodness and truth. It requires us to humbly assess and own the things we need to change; and to turn to him for guidance so that we may have nothing within us — no evil thoughts, greed, malice, envy or arrogance (etc.) — to defile us. Only then are we most free in Christ — truly free to "care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

PRAY The Daily Examen, created by St. Ignatius of Loyola, is an ideal way for growing closer to Jesus and seeking his guidance. Suggested for the day's end, this prayerful reflection helps you recognize God's presence in the day's events, assess your thoughts and behavior, ask for his help in growing in goodness, and discern his plans for you.