

WSC REFLECTION GUIDE

Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8
Psalm 15:2-5
James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 30, 2009

Word: Jesus, the Living Bread, leads us to eternal life.

Theme: Jesus leads us to eternal life when we honor Him with our hearts and act on His word. [Witnessing]

Promise: *“Whoever walks blamelessly and does justice... Shall never be disturbed.”* (Ps 15:2, 5b)

Reflection:

This Sunday’s Gospel contains strong words of Christ against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes of His time. He castigates them for clinging to the tradition of purification before eating, instead of heeding His commandments. He chastised them for teaching human precepts as doctrines, instead of witnessing to His word. Christ reminds the crowd of Isaiah’s prophesy about hypocrisy: ***“This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me ...”*** (Mark 7:6) He emphasizes that from within people’s hearts come evil thoughts, adultery, greed, deceit, envy, and arrogance; all of which defile.

Christ’s rigid warning convicted me. ***“Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.”*** (Mk 7:15) Then it struck me that if Christ were to convey this warning as an assurance or a promise, He would have said, ‘Nothing that enters one from outside can save that person; but the things that come from within are what save.’ The “paraphrased” verse then promises that what comes from our hearts, rather than what comes from outside us, is what will bring us to eternal life.

As present-day disciples in Community, what then may be comparable to the tradition of purification during Christ’s time? The closest that comes to mind are our covenant pledges. As covenanted and committed members of our BLD Covenant Community, we have committed to our Lord and to our Community to observe life-long pledges; eight pledges for covenanted and five pledges for committed disciples. Foremost and common to both lists of pledges are:

- We shall surrender ourselves totally to God the Father, to Jesus Christ the Son of God, and to the Holy Spirit of God. We believe that God is the Source of all authority. We humbly offer ourselves in submission and servanthood to God’s authority as represented by the Catholic Church in the persons of the Holy Father and the Bishops of the Church. We submit to the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop of the Diocese and to follow those to whom he has lawfully delegated his authority.

We commit ourselves to the guidance of the BLD Covenant Community Spiritual Director and to those who constitute or represent the BLD Covenant Community Council of Servant Leaders.

- We shall regularly share our knowledge and experience in the Word with other members of the BLD Covenant Community at least once a week at our designated Word Sharing Circles (“WSC”).
- We shall faithfully pray and worship in unity and fellowship as one BLD Covenant Community at least once a week.

Let us examine our attitude toward these pledges. Do we consider them as external duties required of us to remain as active members of the Community? Or do we regard them as critical components in developing a deep relationship with God as His followers?

During our times of cynicism, do we question and challenge the authority of our Spiritual Director or District leaders? Should we not regard their guidance as spirit-led directions stemming from their God-anointed authority? During our times of doubt and anxiety, do we consider going to our weekly Word Sharing Circles as mere gatherings for fellowship? Should we not regard our WSCs as occasions to share with and learn from other Community members how to live by Christ’s Word? During our times of spiritual dryness, do we look at our weekly Corporate Worship as obligations just to fulfill our attendance requirements? Should we not regard them as providential opportunities to intimately commune with and be personally united with our Lord?

Brothers and sisters in Community, our pledges are not external pressures exerted by our Community upon each of us. They are not secular traditions that we may or may not follow, depending on convenience. Our pledges are our life-long commitments. They are our covenant with our God as His disciples. Keeping our covenant pledges therefore should stem from within us, with the inner disposition from deep within our hearts.

Prayer:

Father God, forgive me for the times I have consciously or unconsciously failed to live up to my covenant pledges with You. Open my eyes and heart, O Lord. Make me realize that these pledges are the means to guide me in my spiritual walk to gain Eternal Life. Teach me, Lord, to observe them constantly, to witness them unreservedly, and to live them unconditionally; that I may be worthy of Your plan of salvation for me. Amen.

Personal Reflection Guide:

1. Recall the times that you had wavered in observing your covenant pledges. Share one of these incidents with your circle members giving attention to the reasons why you are unable to fulfill your obligation.
2. What have you done to correct your failure? End with a prayer for the Lord to strengthen your resolve to observe the pledges of your covenant with Him.
3. Agree with your circle members to pray for each other during the coming week for the perseverance to live by your pledges.

Next Week's Daily Mass Reading Guide:

August 31, 2009 (Mon): 1 Thes 4:13-18; Ps 96:1, 3-5, 11-13; Lk 4:16-30
Sep. 01, 2009 (Tue): 1 Thes 5:1-6, 9-11; Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14; Lk 4:31-37
Sep. 02, 2009 (Wed): Col 1:1-8; Ps 52:10-11; Lk 4:38-44
Sep. 03, 2009 (Thur): Col 1:9-14; Ps 98:2-6; Lk 5:1-11
Sep. 04, 2009 (Fri): Col 1:15-20; Ps 100:1-5; Lk 5:33-39
Sep. 05, 2009 (Sat): Col 1:21-23; Ps 54:3-4, 6, 8; Lk 6:1-5

“Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!”