

Jesus and “Human Tradition” (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8—Do Not Add or Subtract from God’s Commands

1. “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it” (4:2)

Psalm 15—He Who Does Justice will Live in God’s Presence

1. Acts and Heart: “He who does what is right” and speaks “truth from his heart” (v. 2)

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27—Be Doers of the Word, Not Hearers Only

1. Actions: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (1:22)

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23—Jesus and the Tradition of the Elders

1. Pharisees’ Hand Washing: One of the “traditions (Greek *paradosis*) of the elders” (7:3)
 - a. Done before “eat[ing]” and after going to “the market place”
2. Question: “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition?” (7:5)
3. Isaiah’s Prophecy: Jesus quotes Isaiah against them (cf. Isa 29:13)
 - a. “Lips” vs. “Heart” (7:6)
 - b. “Doctrines” (Greek *didaskalia*) vs. “Precepts (Greek *entolma*) of men” (7:7)
4. Divine Commands vs. Human Traditions
 - a. Do Not Follow “Commandments (Greek *entolē*) of God” (7:8)
 - b. Do Follow “Tradition (Greek *paradosis*) of Men” (7:8; cf. 2 Thess 2:15)
- [5. Corban: Aramaic for “given/dedicated to God” vs. 4th Comm. (7:9-13; Exod 20:12)]
6. External Defilement vs. Moral Defilement: [cf. *kashrut* food laws in Lev 11]
 - a. Evil Thoughts: (Greek *dialogismos* = *voluntary* “plans,” “designs”)
 - b. Sexual Immorality (Gk *porneia*) (NAB, “unchastity”) (cf. 6th Comm.)
 - c. Theft (7th Comm.)
 - d. Murder (5th Comm.)
 - e. Adultery (6th Comm.)
 - f. Coveting/Avarice (9th-10th Comm.) (Greek, *pleonexia*; NAB, “greed”)
 - g. Wickedness (Greek *ponēria*)
 - h. Deceit (7th Comm.),
 - i. Licentiousness (Greek *aselgeia*, “perversion”)
 - j. Envy (Greek, *ophthalmos ponēros*, “evil eye”) (10th Comm)
 - k. Slander/Blasphemy (Greek *blasphēmia*) (7th or 2nd Comm.)
 - l. Pride (Greek *hyperēphania*, “arrogance”)
 - m. Foolishness (Greek *aphrosynē*, “imprudence”)

The Catechism: Sacred Tradition vs. Human “Traditions”

And [Holy] *Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit... *Tradition* is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional *traditions*, born in the

local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which *the great Tradition* is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church’s magisterium. (CCC 83; cf. 2 Thess 2:15)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. What is the connection between the Old Testament text about not adding anything to the Word of God (Deut 4) and Jesus’ denouncement of disrespecting God’s commandments for human “tradition” (Mark 7)?

2. Does Jesus condemn *all* sacred tradition when he condemns “traditions of men” that undermine the “commandments of God” (Mark 7)? How does the example that is omitted from the Lectionary (cf. Mark 7:9-13) help shed light on what exactly Jesus is condemning?

3. Which of the “evil” actions that Jesus condemns stands out to you? (Mark 7:21-22) How are they related to the 10 Commandments?

For Further Study

1. Mary Healy. *The Gospel of Mark*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 134-