



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)  
September 1, 2024

## Law Versus Values

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

That is a very difficult choice to place before people. Why can't we choose both? Actually, that is the ideal.

Law is a legislated way that a group lives out a value. We value safe highways, and so we legislate traffic regulations, speed limits, and so forth. We value communal prayer, and so we devise liturgical calendars and worship ceremonies. Usually, the way we live out a value changes more frequently than the value itself. However, it often happens that people become so attached to a custom or law, though unfamiliar with the underlying value it embodies, that a change of custom becomes very disruptive. This certainly happened in the

Church after the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the 1960s.

This seems to be the source of tension in today's Gospel scene. Washing hands before eating was a ritual custom here, not just a hygienic one. It probably originated with priests who bloodied their hands while sacrificing animals. Eventually, ritual washing became one of the 613 customs that Pharisees expected every Jewish man to observe. Referred to as "a hedge around the law," such customs served to ensure the law itself was protected and would not be broken. Jesus' disciples did not observe this ritual, and so they were criticized.

Jesus immediately came to their defense. He did not disparage the value of appropriate ritual behavior. Rather, he accused his opponents of clinging to out-of-date practices while disregarding underlying values. Practices are external; values are internal. Laws and customs can change; fundamental principles and standards endure. †

***People become so attached to a custom, though unfamiliar with the value it embodies, that a change of custom is disruptive.***

### A Word from Pope Francis

How often we blame others, society, the world, for everything that happens to us! It is always the fault of "others:" it is the fault of people, of those who govern, of misfortune, and so on.... [B]ut *spending time blaming others is wasting time...* Let us ask the Lord today to free us from blaming others.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 29, 2021



## Sunday Readings

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

What great nation has statutes and ordinances that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

### James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

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

[Jesus said,] "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition."

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What Christian values do you try to live?
- What is the most challenging, and why?

# Icon of the Poor

Paige Byrne Shortal

This month at Sunday Mass we will hear excerpts from the Letter of James, written around the year 47 AD to encourage Christians whose faith was weakening. It has one dominant theme: Christianity is not a philosophy, but a faith that must be put into practice. James addresses many issues: gossip, the need for patience, care for widows, orphans, and the sick, the responsibility of each Christian to live a virtuous life and to correct others when necessary. He also makes several passionate statements about the fate of the rich who oppress the poor.

This epistle sometimes reads like advice from a fatherly bishop and sometimes like a rant from a very frustrated pastor. After all, it's been less than twenty years since Jesus' death and



resurrection. James was addressing first- and second-generation Christians who were already wandering from the Way, but he saves his harshest words for the rich, words I take to heart.

Most people would say our family lives simply, yet we lack for nothing

necessary, not only to sustain life but to make it pleasant and always interesting. I've never been hungry. I've never helplessly watched my babies cry for food or shiver in the cold. I've never suffered needlessly for lack of medicine.

The only time I feel poor is when I'm confronted with poverty my poor efforts cannot affect. When I was in Guatemala to adopt our first son, I took him on a bus ride through the city. A woman in traditional dress and carrying a baby on her back was bent over, picking up something from the ground. As the bus paused in traffic, I looked closer and saw there had been a spill of corn. She was picking it up, kernel by kernel, and tucking it carefully into the folds of her shawl. The traffic jam broke, and I never saw her again, except... I see her every day, every time I scrape leftovers into the compost bowl. She is my personal icon, reminding me of my riches and the poverty of so many. †

## Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From *"The Works of Mercy: Heart of Catholic Identity"*  
by Fr James F. Keenan, SJ

Scripture tells us that mercy is the condition for salvation. This is made clear in the Last Judgment (see Matthew 25), where the saved are those who performed what we later called the corporal works of mercy—feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. It is through the practice of these works of mercy that we concretely live our Christian faith. Through them, we show our willingness to enter into the chaos of another. †

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*God of abundance, please protect those who do not have enough to sustain life, and make ways for generous people to share their blessings. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 2–7

**Monday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 2:1–5 / Lk 4:16–30


**Tuesday, St. Gregory the Great:**  
1 Cor 2:10b–16 / Lk 4:31–37

**Wednesday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 3:1–9 / Lk 4:38–44

**Thursday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 3:18–23 / Lk 5:1–11

**Friday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 4:1–5 / Lk 5:33–39

**Saturday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 4:6b–15 / Lk 6:1–5

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