

DEACON JOHN HALL'S HOMILY
Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 28, 2021

Summer is a great time of the year, and we are so blessed to be able to take some time to go to the lake, or maybe the beach, or even a vacation. What is your event that marks the end of summer? Labor Day? The first football game? The children back in school?

For those of you with children, I am sure you are grateful for the return of the school year . . . There is a routine that returns to our lives with the regularity of school. Getting up early, going to school, doing homework in the evening, going to bed a regular time. It creates not just a routine, but a discipline of the body and mind adapting to the rigors of life.

We also are getting back into a routine in our liturgy. After six weeks of Gospel readings from John focusing on the bread of life, we now return back to the Gospel of Mark.

Throughout these last six weeks we've reflected on the Bread of Life, how God feeds us through the Eucharist. And how the Eucharist that we've received inspires us to become Eucharistic people; meaning that as we receive Jesus, we draw life from the Eucharist. Then in turn, take that life and we go out into the world and share what we have received with others.

When we paused Mark's Gospel in mid-July, the disciples had been sent out two by two. They returned rested and then assisted Jesus in feeding the 5,000. Then they lost their faith in Jesus in the storm in the boat. Which is why I believe that Jesus and his disciples were still getting to know each other. The disciples were still building their relationship with their mentor, their teacher, their friend and their God. In a couple of weeks, Jesus will ask his disciples: "*Who do you say that I am?*"

In today's Gospel, Jesus is in the northern area of Palestine, where he grew up in the region of Galilee. So as the disciples get to know Jesus, they probably imitate him . . . just do what he does. It appears that Jesus didn't religiously follow the traditions of the elders and purification rites and nor did his disciples. And

Jesus is challenged by the Scribes, the Pharisees' and the crowds with legitimate questions as to why they weren't following the purification rites. And Jesus replies: "*You disregard God's commandments but cling to human tradition.*"

The purification rites had become more of a human tradition – which were being given equal weight as the Torah. These purification rituals were intended as reminder of a purified heart; but its original meaning was lost.

And Jesus continues to teach all who were listening: "*Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.*" What is it that comes out from within, that defiles us?

Jesus cites examples of what defiles a person – these are taken the 10 Commandments: evil thoughts, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, envy . . . those are the evils that come from within us. Those aren't external things that cause us to sin. Those sins come from within!

You know there is something else within each of us . . . things that are there in our hearts. . . love, mercy, kindness, patience, generosity, truthfulness. All these virtues come from within . . . and these are the virtues that purify, cleanse, elevate and enhance our hearts!

Like the routines that we appreciate for our children or just the routines that note the end of summer, now is good time to reflect on what routines do we need that enhance our hearts? What exercises do we need to practice to elevate our relationship with God? What disciplines of prayer that we need to draw us closer to our God.

So that in two weeks when Jesus asks, "*Who do you say that I am*" we will be ready to answer the question.