**TWENTY – SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME September 1, 2024.**

One of the beautiful things about Catholics is that **we do things a certain way. W**e worship in a particular way. We say particular prayers and in particular situations. We read certain readings on certain days. We make pilgrimages. We light candles and fast and don’t eat meat on particular days. We canonize Saints, and name many of our churches and schools for them. Our leaders wear particular vestments and use incense and oil and water. And of course…we have the Eucharist…a sacred meal central to **who we are** and **who we want to become**.

Nearly everything on that list is kind of “sacred” in its own way. Doing all these things meant, for a holy purpose, to **enter into the mystery of God’s very life**. And that is why they are beautiful …because they each, in their own way, help **point us the way to God**.

Of course, sometimes, we can find ourselves falling into the trap of kind of losing sight of the “goal”, losing sight of **the purpose behind these holy actions.**

**“This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me…”**

So says Jesus to the Pharisees and the scribes who were once again **pointing fingers at others**. And what they were upset about were some “**external**” practices…things that the Jewish people had been doing for a very long time (in this case, washing before meals). And yet Jesus knew the **piety of their actions** did not match what was **in their hearts**. And he calls them on it.

Is that us? Do we leave this place on Sunday and immediately go back to our old ways?

Not easy questions. Jesus is not just making a statement to some people long ago. He is saying those same things **to you and to me**, in this time and place.

For those of you who might have seen the film called “The Way.” The film was about a guy who starts making his pilgrimage walk reluctantly. He meets all sorts of **people** and has all sorts of **experiences** on the way. What is beautiful about this film is the way it **reveals a spiritual truth**…one which is relevant to what we are talking about this day. In one sense, his pilgrimage is a physical journey…a step-by-step experience which gets him from one place to another.

But the real journey that he discovers, is the **interior one**…the one **in his heart.** At the end of the journey, he is simply not the same person as when he started. He has changed. The physical journey was just an outward expression of what was **taking place inside of him**, a manifestation of what God was doing for him and in him.

This, my friends, is the goal, the **purpose of everything we do** through the gift of our myriad **liturgies and devotions and religious practices**. These things exist to give glory to God. They don’t exist because God demands them, but rather, **because we need them.**

And so, today is a day to **look deep within** and examine our **motives**, the “why” behind the things we do. Put simply, true faithfulness (as the Lord Jesus reminds us) begins on the **inside** and spills over to the **outside**.