

Out of the Heart

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 7:14-23. This is a continuation of last week's gospel about what defiles a person.

When there is confusion and even unbelief, Jesus takes time to teach. Jesus plainly teaches the crowd that defilement cannot come from outside a person going into him. The disciples still don't get it and when they are alone with Jesus they ask him to explain. He gives them an elementary bodily function explanation about happens to what is eaten.

In verses 21-23 Jesus comes to the heart of problem of defilement where he says: *"²¹For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

The list in these verses is a comprehensive one and is also an accurate picture of society's actions in our own day. And since we have an old Adam, we too, need to take Jesus' words to heart. They prove we cannot save ourselves; He alone can do that. In gratitude to Him we want to avoid these unclean acts, words, thoughts and desires that are a part of our inborn nature, and with His help fight against them.

Beginning with sexual immorality, 12 kinds of evil thoughts and actions are combined in a dreadful list of vices. The first six are in the plural form and describe behaviors; the last six are in the singular and have more to do with attitudes.

This teaching exposes the uselessness of our own excuse-making and dismisses our claims that other people and things are to blame for our shortcomings and failures. However, Jesus does not merely condemn; He also sets free. Through His promises we are liberated from sin and reconciled to God. We get that heart-healthy food from God's Word and the Sacraments.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for patiently teaching both your disciples and us how to keep a healthy heart. Thank you also for your gifts of Word and Sacrament to offer forgiveness and strength. Amen