

Trinity 13 2021
Proper 17 Year B

Deuteronomy 4: vv1-2' 6-9

Psalm 15

James 1: vv17-27

Mark7: vv1-8, 14-15

St. Paulinus

Sunday, August, 29th 2021

8 & 10 am Mass

God be in my head, and in my understanding.

God be in my mouth, and in my speaking

God be in all our hearts and in our thinking. Amen

In our daily readings this week, there has been a lot about Rules, about Keeping the Law, about blind guides and woes to the Pharisees. At first sight, today's readings are about keeping the Rules – or are they?

Certainly the 10 commandments are important. For the Jews, they marked the difference between slavery and Nationhood. For us, they make the difference between civilisation and anarchy,

Deuteronomy tells us, “Take care not to forget; make sure your children and grandchildren know them.”

James says, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only – who deceive themselves.” and, “religion that is pure is to care for widows and orphans, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (That's all!)

So much about illegality, laws and Sin. My first reaction is to be depressed. How do you react to all this legal stuff? I once learned a bit about the Jewish Law, but I think it is difficult for us to even begin to understand just how important it was and is for the Jewish people. Nowadays I wonder how many of us know the 10 commandments. Once upon a time you had to be able to quote those before you could be confirmed Do you know them? Do you know where to find them? I rest my case. But for the Jew, that is only the beginning. The Torah, the Law has been developed into over 600 precepts governing behaviour, and in our Lord's time the scribes and the Pharisees were passionate about all of it.

Of course we would never fall into that trap would we! Or would we we? I have an old tape inside my head that runs, “I have got to get it right or else” (It is not clear what the .or else' is, except that it is dire. Do any of you have thoughts like that? Do you know where they come from. I know where mine comes from but that doesn't stop it being there. I am sure it has nothing to do with Christianity.

Part of my own healing lies in my baptism and in reflecting on that.

The Pharisees spent all their energy in trying to keep the rules, trying to get it just right, and were highly respected for that reason. - but rules are never enough.

We all get things wrong. We cannot make ourselves right. Do we tell Jesus about it, or ask him to show us the way?

Yes, He says that evil comes not from the outside, but from inside us – and spoils things. That is why HE came. That is why he died, and rose – and why we are baptised.

And what are the conditions for being baptised? Is that a matter of getting it right? As I understand it, the only condition is knowing that we are not right, can never get it right by ourselves but need to turn again and again to Christ our Lord to help us, to change us from the inside. And that as I understand it is the work of the Holy Spirit

One of my favourite prayers is, 'Lord, renew your Spirit in this our day. Begin with me'

If you are able to pray this, what do you hope for?

Charismatic Renewal? Dancing in tongues? Would that be good news or bad news?

Do I try making conditions with God?

Yesterday was the Feast Day of St. Augustine of Hippo, a man with a colourful youth who memorably prayed, "Lord, make me chaste, but not yet!" And much later, "God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you"

And a story; a true one. Christian Monasticism began in the desert of Egypt in the 4th Century. Monasteries flourished there for many years but with the coming of Islam experienced persecution and hard times. One such still existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in ruins with a few struggling monks There came a massive revival, renewal of the Spirit, and in the 1970,s had been rebuilt with over a thousand monks. A party of Oxford Theological students went there on Pilgrimage and were able to meet the Abbott, one Abba Matta, who said to them, " Let your minds walk behind your hearts, politely. If you let your mind walk in front, you may get a very good degree, but you will not know Jesus"

And a Shaker Song (about repentance, or turning)

Tis the Gift to be simple,

Tis the gift to be free

Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be

And when we find ourselves

In the place just right

Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained

To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,

To turn, turn will be our delight

Till by turning, turning we come round right.

What might it mean for us to be Renewed in the Spirit? Is that the same as "turning to Christ? Do we want it? Amen