

Sunday 22 B September 1, 2024

Isaac Ole had heard from his grandma stories of an amazing family *tradition* in his family. It seems that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been able to walk on water on their 21st birthday. So when Isaac's 21st birthday came around, he and his friend Paul took a boat out to the middle of the lake. Isaac stepped out of the boat and nearly drowned! Paul just managed to pull him to safety. Furious and confused, Isaac went to see his grandmother. "Grandma," he asked, "it's my 21st birthday, so why can't I walk across the lake like my father, his father, and his father before him?" Granny looked into Isaac eyes with a broad smile and said, "Because your father, grandfather and great-grandfather were born in January when the lake was frozen and you were born in hot July!"

My dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, rules and traditions and customs are made to help people to live a better life and to experience love and joy and peace in human life. They should not become for selfish purpose. In today's first reading Moses describes the beauty of the law and the purpose of the law. God had made a covenant and given law for three purposes

- a) it would help Israel survive as a people
- b) it would make the people proud of their God and His Covenant
- c) it would make neighboring nations marvel at the graciousness and justice of the God of Israel, at His closeness to His people and at their closeness to Him.

God gave laws to Israel to keep them a united holy and intelligent nation proud of their powerful, protective, single God.

In the gospel Jesus describes true religion as serving God and all His children with a pure and holy heart. The original noble purpose was to sanctify the daily lives of the people by making them holy as God is holy. Jesus teaches internal disposition, purity and holiness are more important than external ritual observances. Jesus says external piety without internal holiness is hypocrisy.

In the second reading St. James defines the true religion as keeping the word of God and doing His will by helping the needy, the poor and the weak community. He challenges Christians to become doers of the word, not merely hearers.

In the gospel we read these people honor me only with lip-service, while their hearts were far from me. It is not enough to say or to listen but practice in our lives. Mother Teresa came from Yugoslavia to India at the age of 18. Mother Teresa said in her talk

"When I was leaving home, my mother told me something beautiful and very strange. She said, 'You go put your hand in Jesus hand and walk along with him.'" And that was the secret of Mother Teresa's life ever after. (Rev. King Duncan). Most of us here have good jobs. And we live in nice homes, and we have easy situations. But we don't have the warm smile on our faces that this little nun, working in the most desperate situation imaginable, had on her face.

What's the difference? It may be that we've never put our hand in Jesus hand. It may be that we have Him only on our lips.

My dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ let us put ourselves and family in the hands of God. Let us practice of our daily faith in our life. Our daily family prayers are meant to thank God for his blessings, to present the family's needs before God, to ask pardon for all our sins, and to maintain the spirit of unity and love in the family.