

27 August 2024: Tuesday of the ^{21st} week

[Thess. 2:1...17; Matt. 23:23-26](#)

Homily

Today's Gospel is a continuation of yesterday's Gospel. It is a long list of 'curses' that Jesus hurls at the Pharisees. The authors of our liturgical lectionary no doubt felt that it would have been a bit too cumbersome to read these 'curses' all at once, even if it wouldn't have been such a long read. What Jesus was criticising above all of the scribes and Pharisees in the first part was their hypocrisy. In the text we have just read, He continues on the same theme, and even more explicitly. He mentions two more concrete forms of hypocrisy.

The first form of hypocrisy he accuses them of is that of practising with great precision and even scrupulousness the secondary precepts of the Law concerning the tithe to be paid on the various forms of harvest, while neglecting the most fundamental precepts of the Law, namely justice, mercy and good faith.

The second form of hypocrisy that Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees for is that of submitting to external rites of purification, without worrying about the purity of their hearts. *"First purify the inside of the cup", he said, "then you can purify the outside"*.

These words of the Master should lead us all to a serious examination of conscience. Do we not all, at one time or another, observe with great scrupulousness some very secondary precepts, a little to ease our conscience for neglecting some more fundamental requirement of charity or justice?

And since it is very easy to delude ourselves and to deceive ourselves in this area, the fraternal correction which the Rule of Saint Benedict and the Gospel require of us is all the more necessary. Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, who were so dear to him, gives us a fine example of fraternal correction that can be very direct and even very strong, while being not only very charitable, but even full of tenderness.

Let us ask the Lord for the grace to know how to practise - and receive - this form of charity that is fraternal correction.

Today we celebrate the memory of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine.