

Tuesday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 15:1-2.10-14): Some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They do not wash their hands when they eat a meal.”

He summoned the crowd and said to them, “Hear and understand. It is not what enters one’s mouth that defiles the man; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one.” Then his disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” He said in reply, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Jesus, the prophetic interpreter of "Moses' Law"

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees who cling indiscriminately to the “traditions of the ancestors”. Jesus is neither a rebel nor a liberal, but the prophetic interpreter of the Law of Moses: He does not suppress it, but fulfills it by demanding a reasoned moral responsibility (because the laws are not necessarily good simply for its tradition). Isaiah and other prophets had made the same complaint.

Inside the “Torah” we distinguish: 1) a “casuistic law”, suitable for a historical Israel but subject to change; 2) the “essential principles” of the Divine Law with which the practical rules —of Israel and all the people— must be confronted, developed and corrected. Jesus did not do anything unusual when He opposed the practiced casuistic rules developed in the “Torah” with the pure will of God as the “greatest justice” expected from the children of God.

—Jesus, as the “Chosen” and the prophet who is with God “face to face”, asks the fullest observance of the “Torah”.