



CELEBRATING AT HOME

31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sincere & grounded faith (Matthew 23:1-12)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
**the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.**

Faith gives us the promise of peace
and makes known the demands of love.

**Fill us with the Holy Spirit
through Christ, our Lord.**

Scripture Reading *(Matthew 23:1-12)*

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The Scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi.

You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ.

The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Reflection - *Sincere and grounded faith*

The warnings against the leaders conclude this week. This is the final part of this series of readings in which Jesus strongly criticises various groups of leaders who have failed to grasp what religion and faith in God are really about.

The problem centres around the belief that religious practice is all that is necessary to be justified in God's eyes. According to Jesus, however, it is really about conversion, the continual process of turning oneself towards God. Bit by bit as our hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit we come to see with God's eyes and feel with God's heart. That is why Jesus insists that it is what is within one's heart that is important, not how many religious laws one fulfils.

The Scribes and Pharisees have a 'one-dimensional', narrow view of religion and faith. Jesus' view embraces the whole person in the journey of faith. As St Paul puts it in the Letter to the Romans: faith is a journey of being remade in the image and likeness of Christ. It changes and transforms every part of us.

No true believer can live as though faith and life are separate. Often contemporary civil leaders wish that the Church would confine its comments only to 'religious' things. For us, all the dimensions of life are part of our religious framework – social, political, economic, physical, psychological, mental and spiritual.

All these are viewed from the perspective of our faith. As Pope John Paul II said, "The light of the Gospel must be brought to bear on every aspect of human life." Our moral sense of what is right and wrong develops as we reflect on the issues of human life in the light of the Gospel.

Ours is never an attitude of "all's fair in love and war". No matter what the issue, or what sphere of human endeavour in which we are involved, our words and actions must always be true to the values of our Christian life.

With Christ as our only teacher we learn the ways of wisdom and love. We learn how to live, not by the values of the world, but by the values of the Spirit.

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Prayers of Intercession

Help us to be open and honest
in our actions and our words with one another.

May our humanity
be the sacrament of your life.

Keep our minds and hearts in your love
and grant what we ask through Christ our Lord.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

God of life, love and creation,
you call us to love with integrity
and to act with compassion.
**Empower us with your strength
as we strive to live as your people.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when many cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.



The Carmelites
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