

There is a story from India about a very important man who was from the highest caste. He had many possessions, and many wives. People were always looking up to him, showed him great respect, and gave him gifts in exchange for his favor.

One day, on a whim, he went into the marketplace dressed like a beggar ... wearing only rags like the poorest of the poor would wear. But on the road and in the marketplace and in the village no one bowed to him or let him pass, and when he saw people he knew no one greeted him or gave him gifts.

He got tired of being treated this way, so he went home and put on his best turban, his finest clothes, and his most expensive coat. And then he went back to the market. This time everyone who met him on the road bowed low to him and stopped to let him pass through the crowd. And every shopkeeper he met gave him free samples and gifts and presents.

The man went home, smiling to himself - and when he got home, he took off his clothes, and kneeling ... bowed down to them, saying: "*O source of wealth! O source of wealth! It is clothes that are honored in this world and nothing else.*"

In the first reading, we hear from the Book of Deuteronomy - the name of this book is literally "*The Second Law.*" It represents three sermons given by Moses to the Israelites just before they are to enter the promised land. In the first talk, Moses recounts the last 40 years - spent wandering in the desert; in the second talk, he admonishes Israel to be faithful to the LORD, and reminds them of the Law of God given on Sinai; and in the third, he speaks of God's loving-kindness, and that if they should fall short of God's Law - they can always repent.

In the Gospel, we hear about the Pharisees. In the over 1,300 years since the death of Moses ... the Law had gone from being a source of comfort of God's love ... to being a weapon in the hands of many of the religious leaders.

Jesus confronts this interpretation of the Law of God ... emphasizing that it is not external observances that make a person clean or unclean

- but rather what is inside of a person ... in their heart, in their mind, and in their soul; when He says:

*From within people, from their hearts,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,
adultery, greed, malice, deceit,
licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.
All these evils come from within and they defile.*

In the second reading, Saint James emphasizes this when he says:

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is
this:
to care for orphans and widows in their affliction
and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

St. James goes on to admonish his readers and us as well to be “*doers of the word and not hearers only*”.

The 19th century humorist Mark Twain is quoted as saying, “*Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.*”

Yet our Christian faith stands in contradiction to that idea. We are called by Christ and the teaching of the Apostles to “*walk the walk, and talk the talk.*”

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ; let us pray to be “*doers of the word*” ... let us ask for the grace to receive the Word of God - Jesus Christ - in the Eucharist today ... that He might transform us both on the inside and on the outside ... so that what we appear to be, who we are may be pure images of the people we are called to be through our Baptism.

May we become, through the power of God, true children of our heavenly Father ... redeemed in Jesus Christ ... and re-created through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.