

## Daily Readings

**Monday, September 1**  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18;  
Psalms 96:1, 3-5, 11-13;  
Luke 4:16-30

**Tuesday, September 2**  
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 9-11;  
Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14;  
Luke 4:31-37

**Wednesday, September 3**  
Colossians 1:1-8;  
Psalms 52:10-11;  
Luke 4:38-44

**Thursday, September 4**  
Colossians 1:9-14;  
Psalms 98:2-6;  
Luke 5:1-11

**Friday, September 5**  
Colossians 1:15-20;  
Psalms 100:1-5; Luke 5:33-39

**Saturday, September 6**  
Colossians 1:21-23;  
Psalms 54:3-4, 6-8;  
Luke 6:1-5

# Be wary of complacency

**22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
(Aug. 31): (R3) Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23; (R1) Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8; (R2) James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27.

It is a phrase we still use today: He has dirty hands. We could be referring to the spoiled hands of one doing good, honest labor, such as the auto mechanic or the farmer. There is no disgrace in having dirty hands.

The disciples were eating with dirty hands. At least that is what the Pharisees believed. Some of the disciples did not perform the ritual cleansing of their hands before they ate. This probably reflected the coarseness of their backgrounds. This disturbed the Pharisees. It glared out at them like someone picking his teeth in a fine restaurant. The Pharisees were big on form.

Back in 1904, 10-year-old Virginia Cary Hudson wrote as part of a school essay on "Etiquette at Church": "Do not hop, skip, jump or slide in the church vestibule. Tip. Tip all the way to your seat. Be sure and do not sit in other peoples' pews. Jesus wouldn't care, but other people would." And that's the point. God didn't care that the disciples ate with unwashed hands, but other people did.



Father Albert Shamon

### A word for Sunday

The Pharisees were good folk. Actually they were some of the best people in the community. They were simply bound to their traditions. And the sad thing was that this kept them from being effective in their service to God. The scribes and the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

Jesus was a little harsh with these keepers of the status quo. He said to them, "How accurately Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites: This people pays me lip service but their heart is far from me. Empty is the reverence they do me because they teach as dogmas mere human precepts."

Jesus was trying to help people see God in a new way. He will always be an upsetter of the status quo because he is always calling us to higher ground. Christ is always doing a new thing in our lives because he is continually helping us see new realities.

In his book, *The Reputation of the Church*, G. Avery Lee cited four diseases which often strike the church: 1. Sleeping sickness, the disease of a

church that falls asleep in the midst of possibilities for ministry; 2. cirrhosis of the giver, the practice of improper stewardship in giving money to the church; 3. hardening of the hearer's, in which a church loses its compassion and concern for those in need; and 4. spiritual myopia, the lack of vision that keeps a church from seeing the long-term possibilities for ministry. We could add a fifth disease: an obsession with where we've been that obscures where we're going.

What is true of the church can also be true of an individual. Is God trying to do a new thing in your life? Is God challenging some of your old prejudices? Is God saying to you that you've gotten a little too comfortable with the status quo, that God has more to show you about the meaning of discipleship?

Once there was a farmer who refused to improve himself. His pastor would try to encourage and cajole him, but the man just wouldn't change. His response to the pastor was always the same: "I'm not making much progress, but I'm well-established."

That was the problem with the Pharisees. They were really good people. The problem was they were "well-established" — too well-established. And that could happen to any of us if our faith is not vital and our relationship with Christ is not intense. Christ wants to open up new possibilities. Christ wants us to move to higher ground. We ought to open our hearts to him now!

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

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