

## Where Are Our Hearts?

**Intro.** Discussion about proper hand washing is still happening today... in our homes, between parents and children, usually before meals. The definition of washing one's hands used to involve basic soap and water. Today there are a variety of ways to wash our hands, without even using soap and water: for example hand sanitizers and Gojo. And while I think it's a good idea for all of us to wash our hands before we come to church, it's something our ministers are instructed to do.

**I.** Scribes were just what the word means, they were men trained to write documents like contracts and letters. At some point in the history of the Israelites, they gained enough power to add laws to the tradition which they enforced on people. It is this group that observed some of the Lord's disciples

ignoring the traditional, complicated procedures for hand washing. The Lord's response, quoting the prophet Isaiah, was about the absurdity of worrying about hand washing while ignoring the commandments to love God and neighbor. They scribes also taught the tradition – not from God – that certain food like pork was unclean for them to eat. The Lord responded to that by saying *all* food created by God was good. What goes *into* our bodies is equally good. It's what comes *out* that we make evil. The Lord gave several examples of behaviors that are certainly relevant to us today. The statement that all food is “clean” made it easier to minister to non-Jews and others who had no such dietary rules.

Rules are necessary for people and organizations to get their work done. But sometimes rules good at

*one time or place* aren't necessary in a *new time or place*. In the past, the recognized work day was nine to five, five days a week. Now, with technology, my brother and others work from home most days. There was some resistance at first but it seems to work well in many places. Traditions can change without their purpose being lost. Some religious rules and guidelines are important so we can strengthen our relationship with God and worship him reverently. In the early days of the church, Latin was a language common among countries allowing people to buy and sell products and worship together. After a while, Latin was no longer understood by most people but it continued to be used at mass until it was changed to the language of each country. It is easy to pay attention at mass since we understand what is being said and prayed.

**Concl.** Prayers and rituals that lead us closer to God are helpful. Everyone has their favorites. For some it is reading the Bible; for others it is praying the rosary; and others like sitting in silence so they can hear the Lord when he whispers to them. The argument in the gospel between the Lord and some scribes wasn't about correctly washing one's hands. It was about the way they ignored the important commandments of God and focused on the unimportant rules they made up. Washing our hands a certain way **does not** lead our hearts to God. The commandments to love God and respect each other **do**. The sincerity of our words and actions give true honor to God. We might ask what is in **our** hearts.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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