

Twenty-second Sunday of the Year

Focus

A Bible open at today's Gospel, together with a jug of water, a basin or bowl and a hand towel.

Introduction

The Jewish people have many different laws and traditions about keeping themselves pure and clean. Many of these arose in ancient times when people brought sacrifices and gifts to the Temple, so they were often in contact with holy things. They thought that they had to be in a constant state of purity, but many different things made a person impure, and such people could often pass their impurity on to others. To regain their purity, people had to wash themselves in natural water. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds the Pharisees that having clean bodies does not give us clean hearts.

Gloria

Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing Acclamation 1.

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Mark (7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23)
(See page 384.)

Reflection

Is it a good thing to wash your hands before eating?

Washing your hands before a meal is an excellent habit to acquire! It helps us to avoid spreading germs we might have picked up on our hands and becoming ill. The Pharisees were not washing for practical reasons of good health, however, but as a sign of their goodness and purity for all to see.

Why did the Pharisees complain about Jesus and his disciples?

They had noticed that Jesus and his followers had not obeyed their strict rules about washing. They were angry that Jesus appeared to ignore a law that they considered to be of great importance if their lives were to be pleasing to God.

How did Jesus react to their complaints?

Jesus accused them of being hypocrites, because while they were outwardly religious, their hearts were far from God. They had become so preoccupied with their many complicated rules and rituals that they had lost sight of what was really important to God. The Pharisees used the practice of washing to draw attention to their own holiness rather than to please God. Their gestures were empty and meaningless because they were made without love in their hearts.

Why did Jesus accuse them of making human laws more important than God's laws?

The Pharisees surrounded themselves with lots of complicated practices that they thought would bring them closer to God and make them holy. Many of the Jews looked up to and admired them but found it virtually

impossible to satisfy all their religious demands and rules about cleanliness and purity. The laws of the Pharisees had become a barrier between God and his people, making it more difficult to draw closer to his love. They had allowed their own laws about gestures and rituals to overshadow God's law of love.

What did Jesus say about being clean or unclean?

What makes someone clean or unclean does not depend on whether they have washed their hands in a particular way or what they have eaten. It is the innermost thoughts and attitudes of people that make them clean or unclean. What fills a person's heart is reflected in the life they choose to lead. However much they washed, the Pharisees could not remove the pride and selfishness that filled their hearts and spilled out into their lives for all to see.

Activity

Remind the children that dirt on the outside is not what spoils a person's innermost thoughts and feelings. Whether or not your heart is filled with love and goodness is what matters to God. Now pass around a shallow finger bowl with warm water and a small hand towel. Encourage each child to dip their fingertips in the water and dry them, before choosing a cut-out heart shape. On one side help them to write or draw something pleasing to God, before decorating or colouring the other side. They should carry their little hearts in a pocket to remind them of today's Gospel.

Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

We pray for peace in our world
and an end to war and fear.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for understanding and acceptance
between religions, races and within communities.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for people who suffer persecution, hardship
or violence of any kind.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are sick in mind or body.

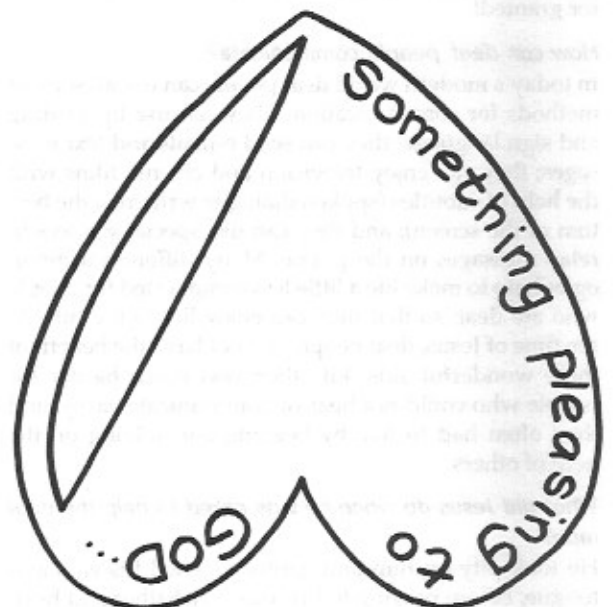
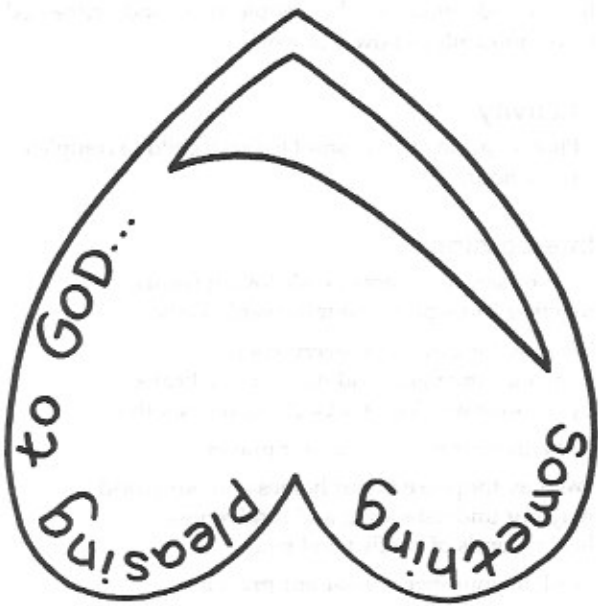
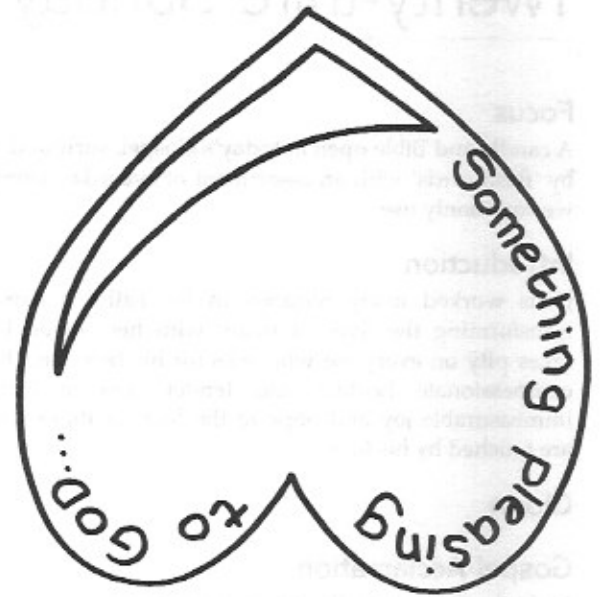
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening,
in the silence of our hearts
let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

Silence

Loving Father,
as we follow in the footsteps of Christ,
keep us faithful to you
and forever close to your forgiving love.
We ask this through Christ your Son.

Amen.



Twenty-Second Sunday of the Year

A clean heart

INTRODUCTION

The Pharisees and scribes had made many laws that were supposed to help the Jews obey God's law. After a time it became more important to obey their own laws than those of God. Today we hear how and why Jesus disobeyed one of these laws.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read:

At baptism, we received the light of Christ,
as a sign of his love.

May we always walk in the light of this love,
and share it with whoever we meet.

SORRY

Have you ever had a bright shiny apple and bitten into it only to find that it is rotten in the middle? What is on the outside is not important, but what is inside really matters. In his Gospel, Matthew tells us:

The words that we speak flow from our hearts. If our hearts are filled with goodness, our words and actions will be kind and loving, too. But if our hearts are filled with darkness and hate, then our words and actions will be selfish and unkind. (Matthew 12:34-35)

(Allow the children a few quiet moments to contemplate these words.)

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 2.

GOSPEL (MARK 7:1-5, 14-15, 20-23)

One day the Pharisees noticed that Jesus and his disciples had not washed properly before eating. They asked Jesus, "Why do you ignore the Jewish custom and eat your food with unclean hands?"

Jesus answered, "You have made the laws of men more important than the laws of God. You take great care to wash and keep your bodies clean

on the outside. But you have forgotten that what is important is what lies inside your hearts. Ordinary dirt cannot make our hearts and lives unclean! Only wicked words, thoughts, and actions can do this. It is more important to God to have a good heart than clean hands."

DISCUSSION

The Pharisees were angry with Jesus and his disciples because they had disobeyed the custom of washing before a meal. It was very important to the Jewish people to keep their bodies clean and free from stain, because they thought this brought them closer to God.

Jesus did not place much importance on these rules because he wanted to explain that dirt on the outside could not make a person unclean on the inside. When people have unkind thoughts, or act selfishly, or say something cruel, all these things make their hearts unclean. What goes on inside us is what really matters, and that is what matters most to God.

A saying we often use is: "You cannot judge a book by its cover." A book may be old and grubby on the outside, but the story written inside could be the best story you've ever read. Just like books, the outward appearance of people can be misleading. We have to look into their hearts, and see what is inside, to know whether they are filled with God's goodness.

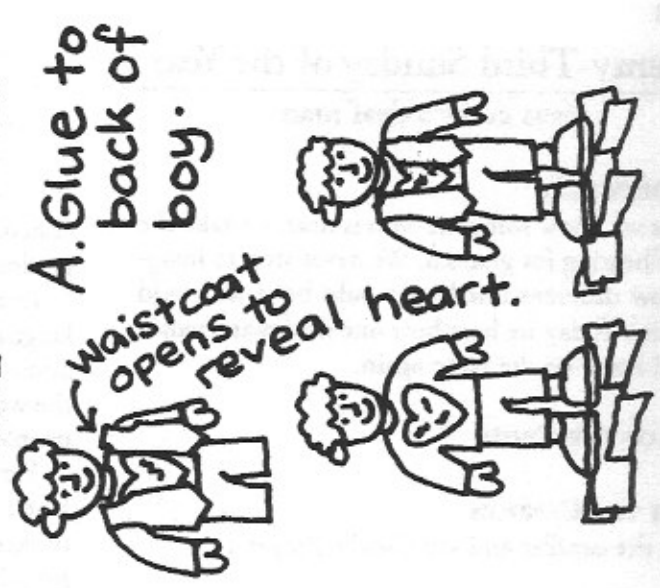
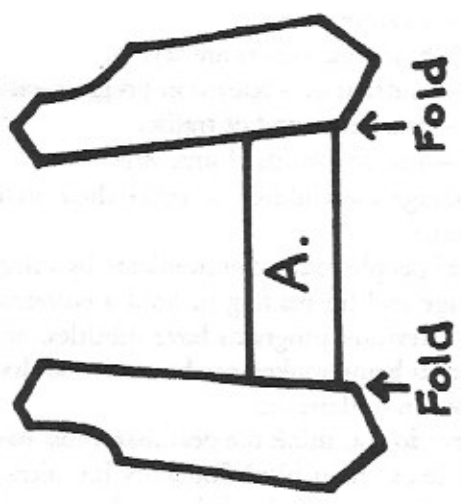
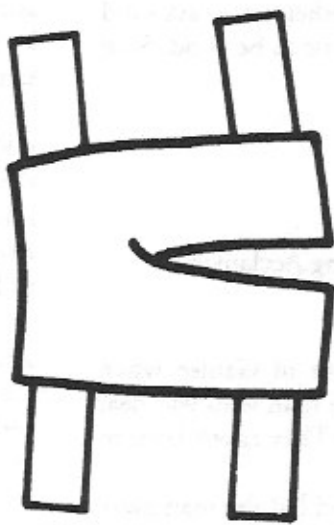
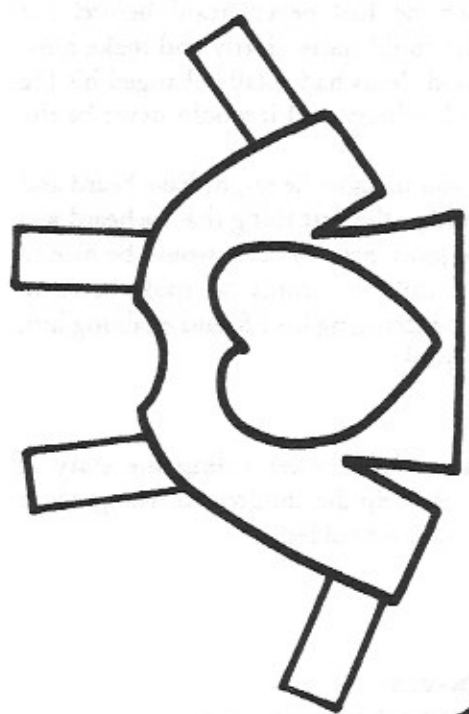
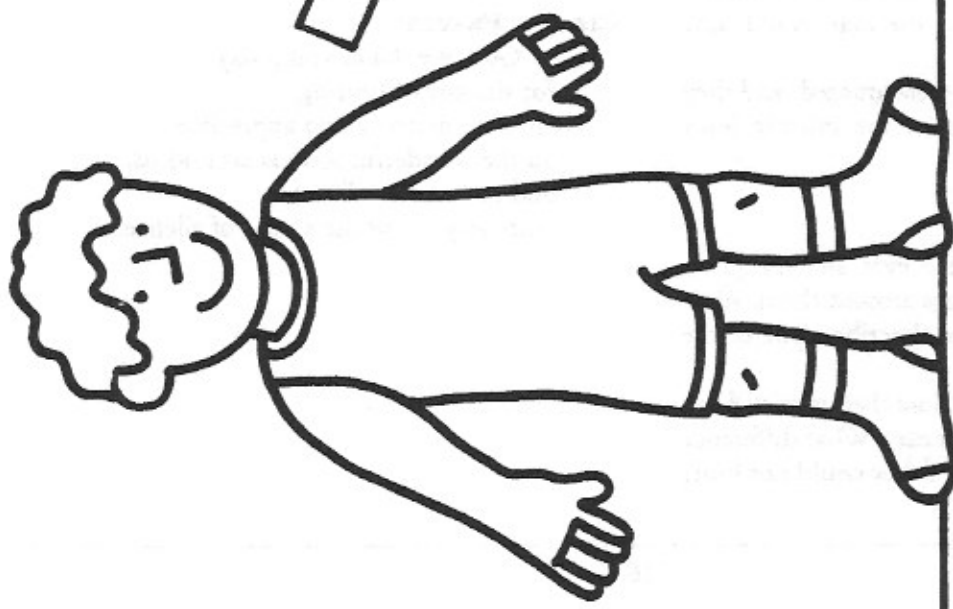
ACTIVITY

Dress the figure in the illustration in some simple cutout clothes, with a jacket that opens at the front. Cut out a large heart shape, and help the children to write on it some of the things which make a person good inside. Stick this onto the figure, and make sure his jacket opens so that the children can see the heart inside.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, pour your goodness into our hearts.
Help us to try not
to judge others by their appearance,
but to look for your goodness inside them.



A. Glue to back of boy.

Waistcoat opens to reveal heart.

FOCUSING: The evil of a sinful heart is what defiles a person, not the failure to observe external traditions.

Reflecting

The Jesus Prayer is a short prayer that goes like this: "Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." From the Eastern church comes this ancient practice of praying the Jesus Prayer. The words of this prayer are repeated over and over again with interior reverence. This mantra (a prayer formula which is repeated continuously) is done in rhythm with one's breathing.

In today's gospel, Jesus asks that we honestly appraise ourselves. What are our intentions in doing the things we do? Being aware of our weaknesses should not bring despondence; rather, we should feel grateful that God's pardon and mercy are ours if we but turn our hearts to God. The praying of the Jesus Prayer helps us to do this.

Our conduct must reflect what is in our hearts. James tells us in the second reading (1:17-18, 21-22, 27) to humbly welcome the word that has already taken root in us. The implanted word has the power to save, to renew, to heal. We show welcome not only by reflecting on the presence of the word within us, by listening to the word in our heart, but by living the word through our actions.

We do God's word through the way we treat others. It is not enough simply to do no harm to others, we must actively help them. Do we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, comfort the sorrowing? Do we counsel the doubtful, forgive all injuries, bear wrongs patiently? Do we tend the sick, visit those in prison, instruct the ignorant? By our actions, people shall come to know our hearts and the word that lives and grows within us.

Talking

1. Consider the word of God already implanted in you. Share with the family or group the ways in which you are living or could live that word.
2. Share your answers:
 - What is your opinion of the Jesus Prayer?
 - Which of your actions show that you live God's word?
 - What one work of mercy will you do this week?

Doing

1. On a large piece of cardboard, draw a fruit tree with roots. Cut pieces of fruit out of construction paper. Write the things you have done or will do for others on each piece of fruit and place the fruit on the branches of the tree. Across the top of the tree, write "We live." By the roots, print "The word of God."
2. Make your weekly Scripture symbol—a scroll with the words "Hear and do" on it or an image of the preaching Jesus. Place it in the display area of your home or on your Celebrating the Gospels banner.

Praying

Pray the Jesus Prayer, one of the following mantras, or any phrase of your choice.

LORD, I welcome your word.
My Lord and my God.
Jesus, I love you.
Into your hands, I give my spirit.
Lord, I turn to you. I love you.



BANNER SYMBOL

THINK and **LOOK** ahead

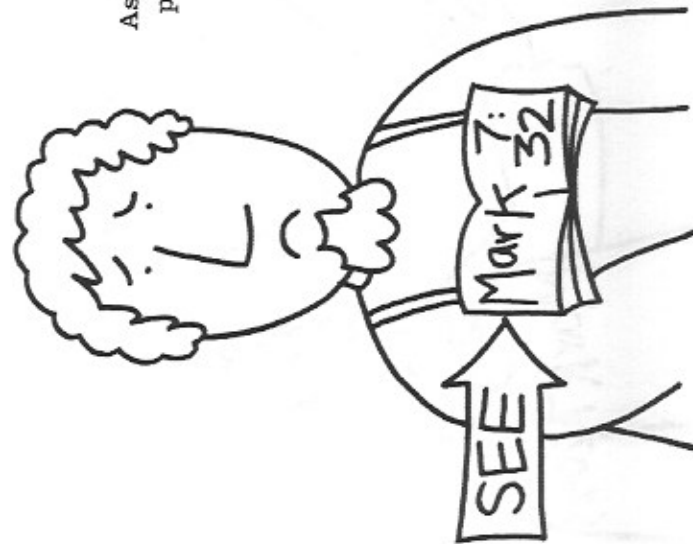
• STEP BY STEP •

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR, YEAR B

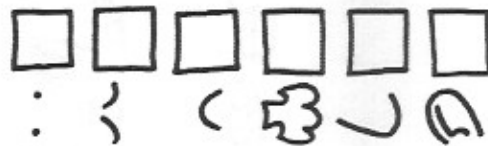
A clean heart

Can you see what is missing
from this man's head?

Why is the man sad?



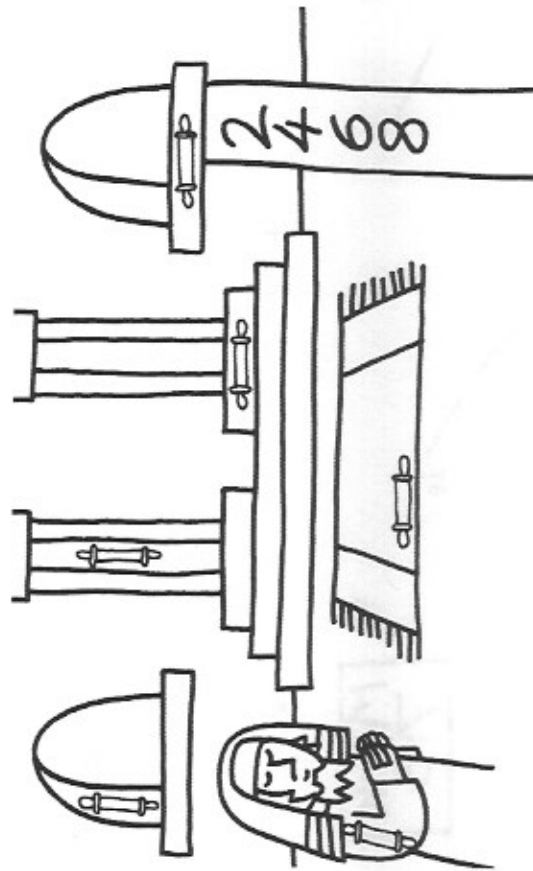
As you find the items,
place a check mark
in the box



MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The Pharisees had many rules
that they obeyed.

How many scrolls can you find in this picture?
Circle the number



The Pharisees were angry
with Jesus and his disciples
for not washing.

Trace the missing letters to find the words of Jesus

Connect the dots to see the picture

