



## *Draw the Circle Wide* *World Hunger Emphasis*

*Mark 7:24-37*

*People were overwhelmed with amazement.  
He has done everything well," they said.  
"He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

*September 6, 2015*

## **Thought for the Week**

**Scriptures:** Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8,

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27, Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-2

I came upon a quote some days ago that set me thinking about Jesus' comments in the gospel about ritual, habit, customs, tradition, certain ways of thinking and doing things. The author, Aaron Hill wrote: "Customs form all of us, our thoughts, our morals, our most fixed beliefs and they are all consequences of our place of birth."

Most of us can think backwards and remember certain ways of living that were specific to our family, the school where we were taught, the church where we worshipped, the secret places where we adventured and many more. We were formed by the faith of our parents, we learned from our teachers the proper way to speak and write and from our pastor and friends within and without the church. In some mysterious sense, we learned how to die well. All this was simply absorbed from the context in which we lived. Ultimately, we probably had little control over it all.

It did not seem necessary to us to say that these were sacred customs, or even religious habit. It's just that this is the way we did things and we had no good reason to distrust them. They seemed to give us reason to live the way we did. In short, they helped us get on with life as best we knew how.

At the same time, however, we instinctively knew that these do not form the true substance of life, not that which gives life meaning; they were simply the shell.

Think then about Jesus' comments about certain Jewish customs of his day, the so-called Kosher, purity laws. He cites, for example, the washing of hands, sprinkling of food from the market, the washing of cups and jugs and kettles, etc. Then Jesus goes on to quote the great prophet Isaiah who lived eight centuries earlier: "This people pays God lip service but their heart is far from me. Empty is their reverence they do me because they teach as dogma mere human precepts." I am sure these words must have stung many of the more conservative of his listeners but they surely must also have made them think again about the customs that had come down to them from centuries earlier.

meaning of worship has been lost to them." Jesus is referring, of course, to life issues: care for the poor, justice, truthfulness and charity.

Here is a gospel that may very well reflect the customs we in the Community of Christ observe. Our sacraments are well known to us, we practice them often during our services. I would not wish to say that they are empty of

meaning. Actually, we think deeply about them, they are truly transcendent. The question, of course, is do we ever take the time and the occasion to reflect on the deeper meaning, for instance, consecrated oil, candlelight, kneeling during the reading of prayers during Communion, the Communion prayers themselves, the baptismal fount, the significance of baby blessings, baptisms & confirmations, bread and wine and holy Eucharist?

We mean no disrespect, of course, but perhaps we have simply gone on our merry Sunday way without ceasing to ask ourselves, occasionally, what all these sacred customs mean to us, how they affect our sense of awe. We all live in a world of speed, distractions and interruptions. Perhaps this Sunday, the Lord's Day, we may have a free moment to ask if we have forgotten to discern between the external and the substance of what we truly believe. Perhaps we may even need to go home again to find out.

## *Happy Birthday Ally (9/8)*

### **Prayer for the Week**

Our Father, we would pray for the many children impacted by acute and chronic malnutrition. We know that worldwide, one in four children do not get the nutrition they need.

The feeding and protection of these children is so important to us dear Lord. We know that hunger affects everything from a child's intellectual development to their physical growth and their ability to fight off illness. Without proper nutrition, a child's heart literally shrinks. And in cases of acute hunger, the liver, kidneys, and intestines begin breaking down.

Please God intervene in this crisis, for we don't have words to express how much this breaks our hearts. Have mercy on these children. We pray these things in your Son's name, Amen.

### **Stewardship Thought**

Community of Christ is committed to caring for the world that God made. We acknowledge that God is the creator of all things, and has called us to be faithful stewards of creation.

This call to environmental stewardship also shapes how we work alongside the poor. Partnerships and programs must include wise stewardship of creation's resources as we help people improve their lives. In this way the results will be sustainable and benefits may continue over time.

In addition, our programs must combine stewardship with a look at justice. "A poor man's field may produce abundant food but injustice sweeps it away." (Proverbs 13: 23).

The poor are often disadvantaged by resource policies and practices regarding land, water, forests and minerals. This requires justice interventions that advocate for both the poor and creation.

Distorted resource policies may also contribute to environmental refugees, requiring new or additional disaster response. Stewardship and justice on climate change are also urgent in many countries and communities.

Finally, the call for environmental stewardship also extends to those in North America. Our call to environmental stewardship does not just exist "out there." We must all be reminded of our own responsibility for environmental and climate stewardship. Together with the poor, we must conserve and protect the world around us; in this way we can globally be good stewards of God's creation.