

GOSPEL PEARLS

True worship

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When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
In vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.*

*You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition."
He went on to say,
"How well you have set aside the commandment of God
in order to uphold your tradition!
For Moses said,
Honor your father and your mother,
and Whoever curses father or mother shall die.
Yet you say,
'If someone says to father or mother,
"Any support you might have had from me is qorban"
(meaning, dedicated to God),
you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother.
You nullify the word of God
in favor of your tradition that you have handed on.
And you do many such things." (Mk 7:1-13)*

The most pleasing offer we can make to God is that of our own heart, with each one of us freely deciding to listen first of all to His divine will, before our ephemeral and myopic gain, and trying to put it into practice. Every act of worship must be carried out for this purpose and contain this principle. If worship is lived autonomously from its main purpose, participation becomes a burden. May Jesus help us to live the original meaning of tradition and worship subject to the desires of God and for them.