

## Vocation Prayer for 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

### Matthew 23:27-32

Jesus said to his disciples, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

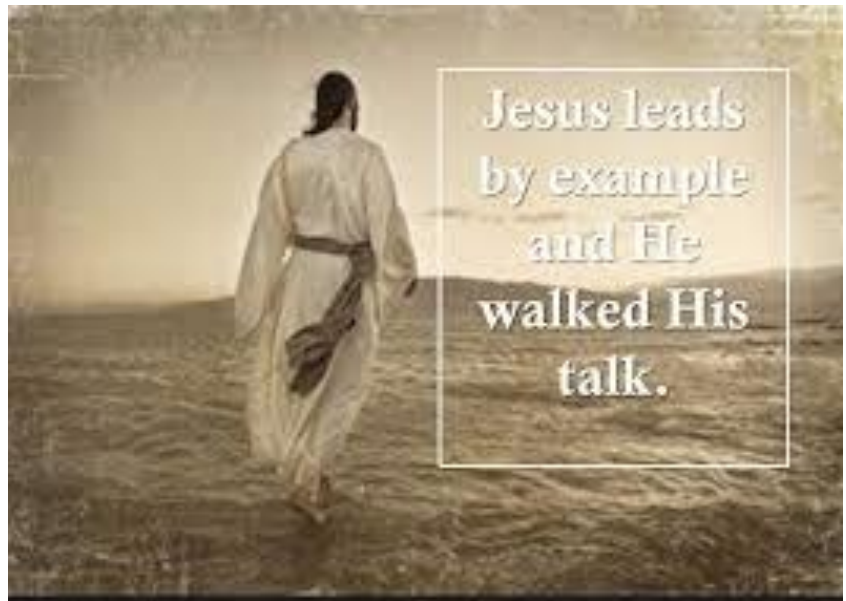
### Reflection

The Pharisees and the scribes in the times of Jesus had the responsibility to teach the people about the will of God. Instead of teaching people the Law of Moses, they added countless laws of their own and laid heavy burdens on them while they would not lift a finger to help.

They made religion give way to their worldly interests. In Mt 23:5 we are told that “they do all their deeds to be noticed by men.” Jesus condemned this act of displaying their religious devotion so that they might win praise from others. Jesus was criticizing their preoccupation with matters that are less important and neglecting the weightier things of the law.

Jesus spoke strongly to the scribes and Pharisees because they did not adhere to His teachings. He used the word hypocrite because they would say one thing and do the opposite. He told them that they were like white washed tombs because in Palestine, every year around great feasts tombs were white washed to be more visible, so that no one could touch them, since those who touched or stepped on them were considered unclean.

We are easily taken up by appearances; but Jesus is inviting us to go deeper into the heart. The heart is the core of our being where the presence of God touches us. It reveals our feelings,



thoughts and choices. Jesus is more interested in the heart than what appears outside. “We learn from Jesus’ attitudes and responses how, in all our relationships, to witness to the liberating power of His love.” (Constitutions par. 15).

Jesus was not against the scribes and Pharisees but was unhappy with their deeds. They appeared to be doing good while in truth they had wrong attitudes. If we rely on God, we will be given the grace not to fall into any trap of wanting to be recognized for our achievements and forget that God is the one who has gifted us.

We are sent by the Church with the mission of communicating the love of the Heart of Jesus. St. Madeleine Sophie’s way of communicating this love was through the service of education especially of the young (Constitutions, par. 11).

The pandemic we are experiencing has had a devastating impact on many young people. A number of them are anxious and worried about what the future holds. Many have dropped out of school, have lost motivation and hope for a bright future. A number of them are already dealing with multiple pressures, especially those who have lost their loved ones or experienced other trauma. Jesus is inviting us to reach out to them and bring hope. May the Holy Spirit inspire us to know how to support those who come to us times of darkness.

In Psalm 139:12 we hear that “darkness is not dark for you and the night shines as the day”. No matter what is happening in our lives God is there and “the darkness and light are but one”. The psalmist also reminds us that God knows even the thoughts that precede our words and actions.

St. Madeleine Sophie once said, *“I am always aware of my own insufficiency, my nothingness, my mistakes. If I act without dependence on the Spirit of Jesus, many times I have to regret it!”* Let us depend on the Holy Spirit without whom we can act like the scribes and Pharisees.

For your pondering:

- What is Jesus inviting me to as I reflect on this gospel reading?
- How consistent am I in my thoughts and actions?
- Is the image I project to others the real me?
- What are my whitewashed tombs?
- Is my way of life attracting people to Jesus or to the work I do?
- How available am I to those in need and how can I be of service to them?

We pray for the “simplicity of heart, which looks to God alone” desiring “only what (God) wishes without self-seeking or self-interest.” (Constitutions, par. 41)

End with the Vocation Prayer from Kathleen Hughes

Teresa Aura, RSCJ UGK Province

