

Pure Religion-22nd Sunday (Year B)

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 and James 1:17-18, 21-22 & 27

The Pharisees were known for their hypocrisy and elaborate shows of holiness. Fancy clothes and public acts of religious observance, they thought, set them apart from others as more important. The Pharisees could not understand why Jesus would meet with the 'unclean' and 'sinners'. They did not understand that Jesus was more interested in their hearts and that their outward actions did not reflect what was on the inside. The Gospel of Mark and James warns us not to fall into the Pharisees way of pretending to be holy but rather to practice pure religion.

Sharing Scripture

Start the liturgy with a simplified game of charades. Instead of acting out films and books, have the children act out actions that you set them. Examples being 'washing the dishes', 'playing football', 'swimming' etc. Make the point that our actions are seen by others therefore it is important that our actions reflect what is in our hearts.

There are many ways you can illustrate the next point so don't use the provided illustration if you think it won't work with your group—it's just an example. The main point is to get across that someone that we see may not always be the person that they initially seem to be.

In the Disney movie Frozen, Hans is a character that we first see as a nice person. He is polite and seems to have the best interests of Princess Ana at heart, at least he does when he is in front of important people like her sister, Queen Elsa. His heart, however, is bad and he intends to hurt others in order to get what he wants, to gain power in the Kingdom of Arendelle. Explain that in today's Gospel of Mark 7 we read about a group called the Pharisees who acted in a similar way to Hans. They wanted to be seen as important people but they cared more about what people thought about them rather than what God thought. They would dress up, follow man-made rituals and make others feel bad that they weren't like them. Unfortunately for them, their ways were not God's ways and it was all about making themselves look good and making others feel bad.

Ask a child to read James 1:27 and after, emphasise that Scripture tells us that 'pure religion', that is genuine, is about how our actions affect others and in particular, how we are serving the most vulnerable in our world. It is not about pretending to be a good Catholic/Christian. Who we really are shows in our actions for others.

SCIAF

SCIAF, the Bishops' Conference agency for international development, actively seeks the most vulnerable people in order to support them and to empower them so they recognise their gifts and help themselves and their families. Help the children to see that they're following James 1:27 when they pray for and raise money for the work of

SCIAF. Share the story of Loko Gufu from Southern Ethiopia as a perfect example of someone who was left vulnerable from climate change in addition to the death of her husband. If you're able, use the 'Loko Gufu' PowerPoint along with the 'Loko Gufu notes' pdf to share the story of hope. If you're not able to use the PowerPoint, then simply show the photos within the pdf so the children can see Loko and her children.

Respond

Finish this liturgy by reading out the prayer found on the pdf titled 'Closing Prayer'