

## Wednesday of The Sixth Week of Great Lent

**“Laws That Bind or Free”** (Regnum Christi Meditation for Tuesday\*of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time by Father Daniel Ray, LC – [Audio Version](#) \* - Luke 11: 37-41)

Luke 11:37-48 After Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, “Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you. “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.” One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us too.” And he said, “Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them. The Lord said: “Woe to you! You build the memorials of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed them, and you do the building.”

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, I believe that you are present here as I turn to you in prayer. I trust and have confidence in your desire to give me every grace I need to receive today. Thank you for your love, thank you for your immense generosity toward me. I give you my life and my love in return.

**Petition:** Lord, grant me this grace of conversion.

1. **Law for the Law’s Sake:** The Mosaic Law was intended *to free them for worship*, delivering them from slavery to pagan gods and from slavery to sin. When the Law (and the added customs and regulations) became an end in itself, it was truncated and severed from the One to whom it was meant to lead. Today in the Catholic Church there are enough laws, customs and regulations to make even the most rigorous Pharisee proud. The danger is that we can fall into one of two traps. First, we can adhere to them with such vigor that we lose sight of the One they are freeing us to worship. We don’t allow our hearts and minds to be educated and formed by them, we just follow them blindly. We

wind up cleaning the outside of the cup and stopping there, without going on to see God's love and let it purify our hearts.

2. **The Second Trap:** The second trap we can fall into is at the other extreme: to give ourselves an easy pass by presuming that "if my heart is in the right place, I don't need to worry about all these rules and such." With a lax attitude we permit ourselves to ease up on fulfilling these laws which in truth will free us. "I know today is Sunday and I should go to Mass, but it's vacation! God knows I'm a good person." Yet it is in the Sunday Mass that we receive the many graces necessary toward our being that "good person". The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy, as with any of the Ten Commandments and customs of the Church, is there to lead us to God. These free us from our often confused, subjective conclusions about how we should worship God and live our lives.
3. **Cleaning the Cup:** "Charity covers a multitude of sin" (1 Peter 4:8). The law of love is the most important of all the commandments of the Lord. In Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Mark, Christ responds to a scribe's question about the first of all the commandments: "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Love of God and neighbor is both the source and the summit of the Law of the Old Covenant and of the New. Living these two greatest commandments purifies and cleanses our hearts—the inside of the cup. So, when Christ says to give alms, he is telling the Pharisees to love their neighbors. Then their hearts will be clean.

**Conversation with Christ:** Lord, I want my heart always to be focused on you. I need your guidance, for I can't do it alone. I need you to teach me how to love you, how to worship and serve you. The laws you give me free me and guide me toward you. Help me to see your hand leading me ever closer to you.

**Resolution:** If there is a rule or custom of the Church that I don't understand or don't practice, I will read up on it to come to understand better how it frees me and guides me in my relationship with Christ.

*\* The Gospel of Luke 11:37-46 is read over two days in the Roman Catholic Church. The above meditation is based on Luke 11:37-41, the one below is based on Luke 17:42-46.*

**“The Grumpy Catholics Guild”** (based on Regnum Christi Meditation for Wednesday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time by Father Daniel Ray, LC - Luke 11:42-46)

“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.” One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us too.” And he said, “Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them.”

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, I believe that you are present here as I turn to you in prayer. I trust and have confidence in your desire to give me every grace I need to receive today. Thank you for your love, thank you for your immense generosity toward me. I give you my life and my love in return.

**Petition:** Lord, make my heart more like yours.

1. **Falling into the Same Trap:** Do we ever find ourselves rooting for Jesus in this Gospel passage? “Give it to ‘em hard, Lord! They deserve it!” We imagine ourselves there in the scene—our arms sternly crossed, our heads shaking in disapproval of those oh-so hypocritical Pharisees. Soon our thoughts turn to someone we know who “should also receive a good verbal lashing!” Even a priest or a bishop might be the subject of our mental reprimand. Yet we now find ourselves right in the shoes of the very Pharisees we so deplore: Our hearts are embittered and dry. Although we are able to condemn with the Lord, we do not love with the Lord. We forget that Christ would lay down his life for these Pharisees he is calling to conversion—even if they were the only ones who needed to be saved. Pointing the finger is easy, but a call to conversion can come only from a heart that loves.
2. **The Grumpy Catholics Guild:** Is there anyone who can’t find at least one thing wrong in their parish or diocese? One thing is to see, pray for, and help resolve these difficulties. Another matter is to dwell on them. That is what the members of the “Grumpy Catholics Guild” (GCG) do. This Gospel passage is the one exclusive lens through which they view everything. For the Rosary, members of the GCG pray the “Vengeful Mysteries”: Jesus curses the fig tree,

Jesus clears the temple, Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees. Might I be an anonymous member—or at least a supporter—of the GCG? Christ used hard words, but they were only fruit of an intense love and longing for the scribes' and Pharisees' salvation, not an intense bitterness toward them. If I have any bitterness in my heart, I need to ask Christ for the grace to forgive and to forgive as Christ forgives.

3. **Helping Hand:** Our Lord was the greatest teacher, the great pedagogue of the fullness of life: the love of the Father. He knew how to bring souls along little by little, at their pace and to the extent they were capable. The opposite is true of the lawyers at the end of this Gospel passage. They would load restrictions, unwieldy responsibilities and weighty sacrifices upon the people, but would not reach out a helping hand to assist the people in carrying the weight. As Christians we are called to help illuminate the consciences of those around us so that they might have a closer relationship with God. However, if illuminating their consciences is merely our euphemism for “throwing the book at them”, we need to stop and see if Christ's words don't apply to us as well: “For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them.”

**Conversation with Christ:** Lord Jesus, at times I look at my heart and see that it is hard and bitter. It is ready to jump self-righteously at the first opportunity to condemn someone else, but only so as to assure myself of my own moral superiority. Grant me a heart, meek and humble like yours.

**Resolution:** If I find myself thinking critically about someone today, I will pray for them and look for two good qualities in them.