



13th Sunday after Trinity | Sermon – CWL Sunny Schwarz

Mark 7:1-8. 14-15. 21-23

Father, may these SPOKEN words be faithful to the WRITTEN word and lead us to the LIVING word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now who would have thought how much attention we pay to keeping our hands clean in 2020 and 2021 and beyond...

We sanitize our hands all the time – We wear masks in buildings, on public transport and planes – We show our digital Covid certificate to be granted access to concerts or events... Things that are new today, but might be considered a tradition in a couple of years. The pandemic changed many of our human traditions.

Historic events – and this pandemic is one of them - bring along new customs and traditions.

The non-existent handshake when seeing your doctor nowadays, the elbow-check instead of a hug among friends or Fr Stan's idea to blow a kiss of peace and love and thus share the peace of our Lord over the airways.

Here on the Canaries I faced another tradition - the Spanish use to kiss a lot.

Even on a first encounter - you normally don't shake hands but kiss – strangers! - on the cheek. Twice.

To me, it always felt a bit strange but I accepted it as part of the Canarian tradition. Nevertheless, I asked my Canarian friends what it's all about. They said: Our friends are no strangers to you because you are a friend of us. Our friends are your friends as well.

I am glad I asked. I now do understand. What a beautiful tradition and thought indeed.



In our Gospel today we're back in Mark again after our long journey through John's bread narrative. Mark is kind of short to the point which is what I like about him. The Pharisees challenge Jesus and they argue about whether people should wash their hands before they eat. But that's not really what they're arguing about of course - it is rather about respect for their human traditions.

We've always done it this way. Does that sound familiar?

Now, there isn't a law commanding that people wash before eating. Not hands, nor pots, nor anything they bought on the market.

The law back in Exodus was that people needed to ritually cleanse themselves before they entered into a worship space such as a temple, and over time, as people would worship at home more because there was no temple near to them, they eventually made it a custom to wash their hands before eating meals.

Jesus then is questioning their motivations - do they truly follow their traditions in order to glorify God or just to make themselves look holy in front of other people?

Do they even know why they still do it or is it simply an empty action?

We can do all the right things, the so-called right things: go to church, confess, cross ourselves and get down on our knees to pray... and those are all wonderful things but if we don't feel it in our heart it's not complete. It's not true. Traditions are great and I assume we all love our traditions...

Just think about the Lord's Prayer. For some, there can only be the traditional version. While others might not get their head around the many thy and thou and thines....

What about you? Which version do you prefer – the traditional or the contemporary?



Another example... No common cup still – and from what we know today, people might be too afraid to share the cup once it is permitted again and might prefer to only receive the bread.

We like to scold the Pharisees but today maybe we are a bit like them. Traditions give us a sense of stability and our traditions shall help us articulate our faith and bring us closer to God, but they do change – sometimes very slowly, sometimes quite fast depending on the circumstances.

Here in our parish, we learned a new version of the Gloria during the pandemic. We now often sing it - but most probably there are still some who would prefer to read it. We have added a couple of new hymns over the past years – we have introduced the Statement of Faith as an alternative to the Nicene creed and still – we need to find the right balance of traditions and new ideas.

So what's best to not end up like the Pharisees?

Let's not get tired of talking to each other and sharing our thoughts about traditions, about changes, about new ideas – friendly, peaceful, open.

We have to remember that there are human traditions that we have built. God didn't drop the church from the sky and said this is it.

It is really what is in our hearts that matters most.

If we expect each other to act with best intentions instead of fearing the worst, then that's a wonderful relationship inside and outside the House of God. We should always be aware of how we feel and how we act and really ask ourselves how this is glorifying God and spreading God's Word.

Are we open to change and allow our church to grow in faith and authenticity, in fellowship and numbers - to be a living church for all who want to be part of it.

The Revd Stan Evans

Camino de las Cuestas 5c | 35572 Tias

Email: chaplain@lanzarotechurch.com | T: +34 928 514241



ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

Here at St. Laurence, it shall not only be a lip service:
We need to keep our doors and hearts open wide. Nobody will be
left out. All are welcome.

Amen.