

Homily based on the readings from October 14, 2025 (Romans 1.16-25; Luke 11.37-41)

There is an important theological principle – which dates back at least to the fifth century – that goes by the Latin name *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Even if you have never heard this phrase before, you are almost certainly familiar with the concept. A fairly loose translation is *the law of prayer is the law of belief*. In other words, the way we structure our worship – particularly our public liturgies – has a profound and lasting impact on the way we understand our faith.

This situation is *exactly* why there are so many rules and regulations pertaining to how the Mass is conducted and how people receive the Holy Eucharist. Most of the details can be found in a document known as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* – sometimes referred to as the *GIRM* (G-I-R-M). Even though the GIRM is fairly technical, it is still worth taking the time to read it carefully. Every single item is there for a reason, and that reason is usually to reaffirm – through the external

aspects of our prayers – our *core* belief that Jesus Christ is *really and truly* present in the Holy Eucharist. For example, consider the rules relating to the chalice that holds the Precious Blood and the ciborium that holds the consecrated hosts:

Sacred vessels should be made from *precious metal*. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded *on the inside*. (328)

Why would anyone gild the *inside* of a cup, which most of us will never see? The answer, of course, is that what *really* matters is not what *you and I* can see, but what actually comes into *contact* with Jesus Christ himself.

Another requirement mentioned in the GIRM is that each church must be equipped with a *sacrarium* – a sink that has been outfitted with “a special pipe and drain that empty directly into the earth, rather than into the sewer system.” Even the *water* that is used to *wash* the objects that

have touched the Body and Blood of Christ must be treated with dignity and respect.

In today's Gospel, the reason Jesus calls out the Pharisees is because their *law of prayer* reflects a defective *law of belief*:

Oh you Pharisees!

Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish,
inside you are filled with plunder and evil.

By emphasizing the *outside* of the vessels rather than the *inside*, the Pharisees are prioritizing style over substance – what people can *see* over what actually matters.

Jesus, of course, is not just talking about cups and dishes, but is *demanding* that the Pharisees make an honest appraisal of their daily lives. Do their actions represent a *sincere* attempt to serve the Lord, or are they primarily intending to impress other people? Are they holding themselves to the same standards as the individuals they are attempting

to instruct? Are they fixating on the *external* details of the law, while still living lives that “are filled with plunder and evil”?

In the end, the formula we all need to follow is incredibly simple. Our actions are important, but they must flow *authentically* from what is inside our hearts – or, to be more precise, *who* is inside our hearts. If we are truly *filled* with the love of Jesus Christ, then everything we do becomes a reflection of that fact. In the end, that is the *only* way for any of us to cleanse our immortal souls – both *outside* and *within*.