

## *Lord Jesus, protect us from hypocrisy*

Once a worried parents brought their son to Mahatma Gandhi, asking for help because the child's love for sweets was endangering his health. Gandhiji told them to come back in 15 days. When they returned, Gandhiji spoke quietly to the boy. Weeks later the parents returned to Gandhiji, delighted because now the boy would not touch sweets. Gandhiji explained that he told them to come back in 15 days because before he could ask the boy to fast from sweets, he himself had to do the same. When he spoke to the boy, he simply said, "For my health and yours, I have given up eating sweets. Will you join me in this fast?" It is not the "blind guide," but this kind of leader who has true influence - whether president or prime minister; pastor or parent. Do you allow any blind spots to blur your vision of God's kingdom and his ways? Jesus went to the heart of the matter when he called the religious leaders of his day *blind* Pharisees and *hypocrites*! The word *hypocrite* means actor – someone who puts on a show to draw attention to themselves. According to psychologists, some of our unconscious behaviour pattern is a clear sign to catch attention of others. *All their works are performed to be seen*. It's not just the Pharisees with their flattering shows of piety who need discipline. We all have a tendency to seek praise and recognition for merely doing what is vital to us as Christians. Do we seek award for brushing our teeth? Glory fades. Tributes bring only temporary satisfaction. Only God lasts. If we seek to do God's will for His honour and not ours, we truly practice what Jesus preached.

The ignorance of the law is inexcusable: that is the basic principle of any legal system or the first maxim. Take for example, the traffic light. If we drive and are ignorant about the traffic rules, definitely accidents will happen and

there is no excuse in the court of law. Therefore, the driver should know the law of the road. As a responsible citizen and as a leader of the Christian community we have to be aware of the basics of the law of the country and of the church.

But the scribes regarded themselves as legal experts since they devoted their lives to the study of the law of God contained in the five books of Moses (Torah). They divided the 613 precepts of the Law of Moses into thousands of tiny rules and regulations. They were so hard in their interpretations and in trying to live them out, that they had little time for anything else. By the time they finished compiling their interpretations, it took no less than fifty volumes to contain them! Jesus rebuked them for neglecting the more important matters of religion, such as justice and the love of God. In their misguided zeal they had lost sight of God and of his purpose or spirit of the law. *To Jesus, the heart of religion is love of God and neighbour.* It is true that law is needed and practice of it is necessary, for law makes love practical.

The essence of God's commandments is love – love of God and love of neighbour. God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. True love is unconditional, costly, and sacrificial – it both embraces and lifts the burdens of others. Do you allow the love of God to transform your whole life – including the way you think of others, speak of them, and treat them? Jesus corrected the hypocrisy of those religious leaders. How are we the same? Whether pastors or parents, whether in public place or at home, we cannot preach one thing and do another thing. We cannot demand of others more than we demand of ourselves. We shall ask for the grace today: "Lord Jesus, fill me with your love and mercy that I may always think, speak, and treat others with fairness, kindness, patience, goodness and protect me from hypocrisy".