***MARCH REFLECTION 2024***

***Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.***

***Invocation*** *(Make the sign of the cross as the leader prays the invocation.)*

Leader: *+ Blessed are the clean of heart,*

***All: for they will see God.***

*Leader: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

***All: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

***Psalm 51*** *(pray antiphonally)*

***Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;***

***in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.***

***Thoroughly wash away my guilt;***

***and from my sin cleanse me.***

***For I know my transgressions;***

***my sin is always before me.***

***Against you, you alone have I sinned;***

***I have done what is evil in your eyes***

***So that you are just in your word,***

***and without reproach in your judgment.***

***Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;***

***wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.***

***You will let me hear gladness and joy;***

***the bones you have crushed will rejoice.***

***Turn away your face from my sins;***

***blot out all my iniquities.***

***A clean heart create for me, God;***

***renew within me a steadfast spirit.***

***Do not drive me from before your face,***

***nor take from me your holy spirit.***

***To the God of heaven give thanks,***

***for his mercy endures forever.***

***Scripture*** *Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence.* *Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean.”*

 *Matthew 23:25-26*

**(Pause for a few moments to meditate on the reading.)**

***Reflection*** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites!” Once again Jesus does not mince any words with these supposed religious leaders.   And even though the Pharisees tithed and kept the law as they were required to do, Jesus soundly criticizes these pious men for neglecting the essential and important aspects of the law: judgment, mercy, and fidelity.  He scathingly calls the scribes and Pharisees “blind guides” who “strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.” These words are a powerful and public denouncement of the scribes and Pharisees.*

*However, we may be able to identify with the scribes and Pharisees.  It often is easier to live out the letter of the law of God rather than to delve deeper into the call we receive from Jesus.  Jesus desires that we be wholehearted and loving in all our actions.  Yes, we may automatically judge others; however, will we choose to be merciful and understanding with them?  Are we faithful to what we profess?  Or do we choose which part of the law we will observe?  Does our understanding of the law include compassion and love?*

*Today I invite you to take some time and ask yourself: how do I approach the law?  Do I simply live the letter of the law?  Or do I strive to live the law from a compassionate and loving stance?  The letter of the law is cleaner and simpler; however, we are messy human beings and at times much more is needed than the letter of the law.  The most important law is the law of love.  This is the law Jesus exemplified throughout his life.  Today will we choose to follow in his footsteps?*

 *Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana*

***Prayer Heavenly Father,***

 ***I come before you today with a humble heart***

 ***acknowledging my need for a clean heart.***

 ***I recognize that my thoughts, desires, and actions***

***have not always aligned with your will.***

***Create in me a clean heart and a steadfast spirit.***

***May your Holy Spirit help me to walk in integrity and righteousness***

***before you and others.***

***Amen.***

***Sign of the Cross***

