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18 Wednesday

WEDNESDAY, 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Year

James 1: 19-27

Ps 14: 2-5

Mark 8: 22-26

This week and next, up to Ash Wednesday, we're listening to the Letter of St James. As we hear today, in James' direct, clear and forthright language, just listening is not enough. Let's indeed be quick to hear and take in God's word. That means reflecting on it, reflecting on ourselves in its light, "taking some fruit" (in a phrase beloved of St Ignatius in his 'Spiritual Exercises'). James himself suggests the image of a person looking at themselves in a mirror, seeing a reflection there, but then forgetting about what they saw. Our prayerful 'reflection' isn't meant to be just self-admiration, or deceiving ourselves about what we're looking at. We need perhaps to remind ourselves that Christian prayer and faith is not escapism, or just feeling-good: we have to be "doers" of the word, as well. These days, there is a lot of interest in 'spirituality', as a kind of New Age secular thing, quite divorced from 'religion' of any kind. It's more focussed towards personal fulfillment, feeling-good, and can be rather self-indulgent. This 'spirituality' is certainly not the same thing as 'religion'. Genuine religion is a bond binding us to God whom we worship, to people whom we love and serve in His name, to His whole creation of which we're part. It is to 'care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world'.

Lord, in my prayer and in the work of my life, let me like a mirror be a reflection of Your word and Your love to the world and people around me.

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Text wordcount: 265