



**TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,
Year of Saint Matthew, RCL “A”,
PROPER 15, Sacred Time.
Aug. 16, 2026, Secular Time**

“DECONSTRUCTING PURITY” (VERSES MT 15: 10-20)

In a strange sort of way, the first part of today’s Gospel text is about the mouth. My mouth used to be in much better shape than it is now. I used to have a full set of nice white teeth. Now there are implants and crowns. I also have a missing tooth or two, and scars where my wisdom teeth were removed. I bite my tongue and cheeks on a regular basis. The foods I eat have stained my teeth over the years, and they are nowhere near as white as they once were. In today’s text, Jesus suggests that the mouth is a sacred gift of God. First, it is the seat of language. The text goes on to link language with Understanding (NOEO), another crucial and sacred gift from God. What comes out of the mouth, we learn, is sacred. To my relief, it is not defiled by what we eat or how pretty our teeth might be. What defines and often

defiles this sacred gift of God's creation is what comes out. This is determined by the language we utter to one another. Sacred gifts become defiled when they are used for base and common purposes. "Koinos" or defilement is spiritual desecration. Jesus dismisses religious practices and rules as useless tools of the elite. Here is one more example of how the elites in Israel twisted the Law to control the lives of the populace. Jesus goes on to move the locus of purity away from race, ethnicity, occupation, status, and many other kinds of social boundaries. Instead, he focuses on personal responsibility and action. What comes out of the sacred mouth is crucial. Jesus was concerned with how we use the gift of language to build shared structures of faith. The word for defiled is "koinos". It is used in the Bible many times. It is always deployed as a negative descriptor. At its root, it means Common. That is something you might find tossed in the gutter. However, there is one time in the Bible that the word "koinos" is used in a positive, even glorious light. It is, of all places, in JUDE 1:3. Here it refers to the "common" "koinos" gift of salvation. The love of God in Christ is sufficient to transform what is common and subject to defilement into the instrument of our shared redemption. What is common becomes, in His hands, glorious. Going a step further, this fungible part of "Koinos" gave rise to another precious gift of Grace: "Koinonia". "Koinonia" is the wonderful gift of Christian Fellowship. Our "common" fellowship is indeed rooted in the sacred use of our voices in worship and as friends bound together in Christ. Finally, the power of "koinonia" is at the heart of how we reflect the Gospel to all those around us. BT

Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28

Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the

stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.” (NRSV)

Image: What Comes Out of the Mouth is Crucial! Preparatory Drawing by Leonardo da Vinci for the painting: “The Battle of Anghiari”, 1505 CE.