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Reflection on the Gospel of Mark 7: 1-8
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This time of year my husband and I tend to receive emails and notes from our children's classroom teachers asking for disinfecting wipes and sanitizers to resupply and help manage the germ sharing in the classroom. Keeping hands clean in the flu season is a valuable goal.

Today's gospel from Mark reveals the Pharisees' and some of the scribes' concerns over hand sanitation. They too seem interested in hygiene but not simply to control and contain germs. They are voicing objection to this observable breach of custom, a tradition that endorses a spiritual cleanliness, that deems one fit for activities such as eating.

Jesus' response is sharp and strong.

"You honor me with your lips but your hearts are far from me."

"You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Even though we here today are not the target audience for this retort, I don't for a moment think, Ha! Those hypocrite Pharisees. How could they get their priorities so wrong?

No, on the contrary, like much of Jesus' teachings, these challenging words transcend the centuries to our day, our time and reach us here today with a powerful opportunity.

As leaders, gathering here and now, to reflect on our school's mission, charism and the formation of our community's faith, can we consider these critical words of Jesus?

How have we in our own lives put second things before first things? How might the environment at school be more attentive to traditions, policies and schedules than to the overall mission of our school, to the invitation to draw near to God, to receive the healing love of Jesus?

Today we drill down into the heartbeat of your school to assess the strength of its pulse. May we be brave to ask how near our hearts are to Jesus. May we have courage to recognize the times when we might be looking too narrowly at the dirt on others' hands. And may we welcome Sophia to see and follow those who use their hands to point to God in our lives.

Glory be to the Father....