

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jul 27th 2012

The Pharisees interpreted the law so strictly that no one could observe it; not even they themselves. There was certainly no hope of observing it, they felt, if one remained immersed in ordinary living, so they withdrew (the word 'Pharisee' means 'separated'). Of course they came to despise others who were still immersed in worldly affairs. They were constantly scandalized by Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners. They were consumed by zeal for the law rather than zeal for God. Their interpretations were strict to the point of absurdity. We should be thankful to them: they exemplified perfectly a track that religious people are forever in danger of sliding into. They show us that it is quite possible (and easy) to be interested in religion without being interested in God.

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