

Once again this congregation of good souls has shown they can come through in a pinch and accomplish near miracles. We may not have fed the 5000 but you all did a wonderful job celebrating the life of our beloved Sheila Keeler. In the absence of Father Doug, Senior Warden Judy



Frothingham and Communicator Carol Hopkins, everyone pitched in. Wendy Blake, as Vestryperson-in-charge coordinated with the family and Father Victor Hugo Garcia and once again the special grace of St. Michael's shined forth, thanks also to Debbie and her Hospitality Ministry. A special personal thanks to Pat Manners for her photos which captured those filled pews, of Sheila's family and friends, and for the service itself. Well done SMAAA.



We are especially grateful to Father Victor Hugo for going to Sheila's with literally "no notice" to perform the last rites.



It is September and the choir has reassembled in nearly full force. Are you called to sing? If so, how 'bout making your way up to the choir loft one of these Sundays and "lifting your voice." We are happy to welcome back Tim Bardwell's bass!



The next lecture in our “Know Your Neighbor” series features Walter Lopez discussing the beautiful, the talented, the one and only Maria Felix. Walter Lopez, real estate broker,



philanthropist and local historian will give us a taste of Cuernavaca’s little known role in Maria Felix’s storied career. Her fabulous taste in clothing, jewelry (and men) should make for a fun-filled lecture. Behind the scenes, Maria Felix, “La Doña) was also one of the nation’s influential power brokers. Walter will be describing her daily life in Cuernavaca - a story of global fame and quiet power. The photo at left is Maria Felix as she was portrayed in the movie Coco. Mark your calendar for September 25, 4PM, @ SMAAA.

On Saturday September 28th we will have our first of several House Dinner Concerts. These concerts all benefit the Outreach programs of SMAAA. Our first will be held at Judy Frothingham’s home and will feature the string quartet ARTESALA.



Concert tickets are 400 pesos and space is very limited.





So be sure to reserve your tickets ASAP.

*A View From the Pew* is a new feature of The Communicator. One member of the congregation will be featured every week to help us get to know one another better. First “victim” (!) is our Senior Warden Judy Frothingham.

Judy’s late husband Hank grew up in Mexico and remained “in love” with Mexico throughout his life. After Judy married Hank and joined him on his annual pilgrimages to this country she soon felt the same. Judy and Hank originally planned to move to Oaxaca, a city Judy still loves dearly, but after spending a few months in Cuernavaca, getting to know people and attending Saint Michael’s, they decided to take the advice of Hank’s life-long friends, Patsy and Charlie Davis, and find a home here. We’re sure are glad they did!!!

Judy came on as our Senior Warden at probably the most difficult time in SMAAA history. It had become increasingly obvious that the church was spending far more than was coming in. Judy’s background in

finance and her good business sense told her this would ultimately have negative financial consequences. She ordered a full audit and when the report indicated (what we all probably knew) that there had to be major changes - she took on the unpopular task of downsizing staff and contracted services. Fortunately, some staff were ready for retirement but even then it was still quite difficult.

One of the fairly large budget items Judy eliminated was the contracted service of garden maintenance. She combined the need to conserve water with eliminating the garden maintenance contract — donating artificial turf and low maintenance border plants. Thanks to Judy's foresight, we now have two large garden areas that are perfect in all weather AND we don't need to order twice weekly "*pipas*" during the dry season.

When asked about her most successful projects, she cites the garden, Church Concerts, Divine Dogs of Saint Michael's Calendar and the refurbishment of Magnolia Hall. Judy and the Vestry are hoping that that space can be used for contracted parties and bring income to support our ministries.

Under Judy's leadership our website has also become a useful part of our outreach. A calendar of church activities is maintained by Ivonne, Wendy's highly efficient administrative assistant.

Inspired by the fact that there are always at least five dogs in attendance at SMAAA, Divine Dogs of Saint Michael's is also Judy's brainchild. A 12-month calendar of our church dogs will be ready for sale shortly. Judy is hoping this will be a major fundraiser. Photographers, Onagh Ash and Mariela Sandoval, did first class pet photography. (Amigo is very excited to be a Divine Dog!)

Judy has long term goals for SMAAA. "For the church to survive we need young people." She's hoping the money brought in by the various fundraisers will be used to fund programs geared at younger families. "Last summer's first ever Vacation Bible School is a start but I'm hoping we can subsidize a Sunday School teacher and fund a youth choir with a director."

Judy is a team player and she has a great team behind her. "The Vestry has stepped up and worked hard to make the various programs at Saint Michael's a success. Without them I could not do my job — especially during Father Doug's medical absence everyone has stepped in to help."

Thank you Judy for all **you** do for SMAAA. We are all in awe and most grateful for your leadership.



Thursday Yoga with Ann has morphed into Tuesday and Thursday Yoga with Ann. The Tuesday class is held at 10 and most participants head on over to the Library for the English Tea held every Tuesday from 11-2pm. Thursday's yoga is 11-12:30. We are so grateful to Ann Moxey for her very popular program. If you haven't tried it yet, please do. It's a wonderful community-within-a-community.

Part of the outreach of SMAAA is assisting San Pablo and Father Victor Hugo with their ministry to the homeless of Morelos. Please don't forget to bring non-perishable food stuffs, toiletries, cleaning supplies, then leave them in the basket at the back of the church. There is also a peso jar if that's easier. Pat Manners is our Pastoral Outreach coordinator. If you would like to assist monthly in a communal meal at Saint Michael's Cathedral downtown, please let her know. You don't need any particular skills... just a smile and willing hands.

Mexican Current Events with Charlie Goff is held almost every Wednesday, 5-6:30 PM at the Cemanahuac Educational Community, 4 San Juan, Colonia Las Palmas. It is a unique opportunity to learn more about what is happening in Mexico. Free and no reservations required.



Do you know of a senior who could benefit from a couple of hours of socialization, physical and brain activity? Our Friday Senior Club, Fridays 10-12, is an exceptional opportunity. With Lorena Molina and her sidekicks, Amanda Hooten and Pat Manners, Everyone is guaranteed to have fun!!!

Don't forget those every Friday English-as-a-Second-Language classes (ESL) with Catherine del Rey Kolodin, which resume January 16, 5PM. Do you know of a child who would like to participate? What an opportunity! Simply WhatsApp Catherine if you plan to attend or are sending a student. Catherine's WHATSAPP+1480-239-7447.

Many of you have requested the transcript of Victor Hugo's September 1 homily. Thank you Father Victor Hugo for making it available.

### **Homily on Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

*SMAAA*

*September 1st, 2024*

*(Fr. Víctor Hugo García)*

#### Introduction:

Today we reflect on a passage from the Gospel of Mark, in which Jesus confronts the Pharisees and questions their obsession with external traditions instead of focusing on what really matters: purity of heart.

#### Joke to break the ice:

There's a story about a tourist who arrived in Mexico and joined a religious procession with great enthusiasm. He asked a local, "Why is everyone walking on their knees?" The local replied, "It's a tradition." The tourist then responded, "How about we walk together toward a better life instead of on our knees?" Sometimes it's easier to follow tradition than to walk the right path!

There's another story: They say that once a priest went to visit a parish (let's say San Pablo, not SMAAA) and saw a group of people arguing heatedly about the correct way to put the candles on the altar. One said: "It's to the right first and then to the left!" Another shouted: "No, first to the left and then to the right!" The priest looked at them and said: "It doesn't matter if you put them on

the right, on the left or in the middle. What matters is that you do not extinguish the light that is in your hearts.”

Exegesis of the text and Mexican context:

In Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23, we see Jesus challenging the Pharisees and scribes who criticize his disciples for not following the purification traditions. Jesus responds by quoting the prophet Isaiah: “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Mark 7:6).

Jesus puts the focus on the interior of the human being, teaching that it is not what enters the body that contaminates the person, but what comes out of the person's heart: evil intentions, injustice, greed.

In Mexico, this message comes alive when we see the stark contradictions between religious practices and the reality many people face. From the perspective of the gospel we just read, we understand that faith cannot remain in rituals but must translate into a commitment to social transformation. It doesn't matter if we are locals or foreigners; we are all part of the same community that needs to build a space of dignity and mutual respect.

Illustrative story:

Let's imagine the story of María, a humble woman who works as a domestic worker. She is often treated as invisible by her employers, who insist on keeping her home spotless while ignoring the dignity and respect she deserves. One day, the family calls her in for a special meal, and before eating, everyone does a long hand-washing ritual, following a family tradition. María watches in silence, and at the end of the day, when everyone is going to sleep, she approaches the remains of the food and decides to take a plate to her neighbor, who is starving. While others were more concerned with appearances and rituals, Mary, with a heart full of compassion, acts with love. Mary reminds us that, as Jesus said, what is



important is not what enters through the hands, but what comes out of the heart: justice, generosity and love for our neighbor.

Let's imagine another story, the story of Jennifer, an American woman who came to Mexico seeking new opportunities. Since she arrived, she has been actively involved in her parish, helping with social activities. One day, Jennifer notices how some of her churchmates are more concerned with appearances than with the well-being of others. They decide to spend money on decorations for the next celebration while some families in the community lack enough to eat.

Inspired by Jesus' example in the gospel of today, Jennifer decides to organize a food drive instead of spending on decorations. She invites both locals and foreigners to participate, not just with money but with their time and care. Although not everyone was convinced at first, the initiative slowly grows, and what began as a simple act of solidarity becomes a true testament to God's love in action.

Jennifer reminds us that it doesn't matter where we come from; what matters is how we contribute to the community in which we live. Her faith does not remain in words or rituals but is expressed in concrete acts of love and justice.

Application to daily life:

The lesson of Jesus is clear: our faith must go beyond the superficial and focus on what is essential, which is love and justice

As many of us, foreigners living in Mexico, we are part of a complex reality full of contrasts. Today's Gospel challenges us to go beyond the superficial and commit ourselves to the community that welcomes us. It's not enough to participate in celebrations or perform rituals; it's about being attentive to the needs of those around us and responding with a compassionate heart.

We can ask ourselves: How are we contributing to the well-being of our community? Are we willing to challenge traditions when they do not reflect the love and justice that Jesus teaches us?

Living our faith here means being agents of change, supporting those in need, and building bridges between cultures, always committed to making Mexico a fairer and more brotherly place for everyone.

Conclusion:

Jesus calls us to an authentic faith that does not stay on the surface but is lived in concrete actions and seeks the transformation of the heart and society.

As people from different countries, we are part of the fabric of this nation and have the opportunity to be light and salt in our communities. May our presence here be a testimony of love, justice, and solidarity, living with a heart willing to serve and transform, because, in the end, that is what really matters before God.

**Amen.**