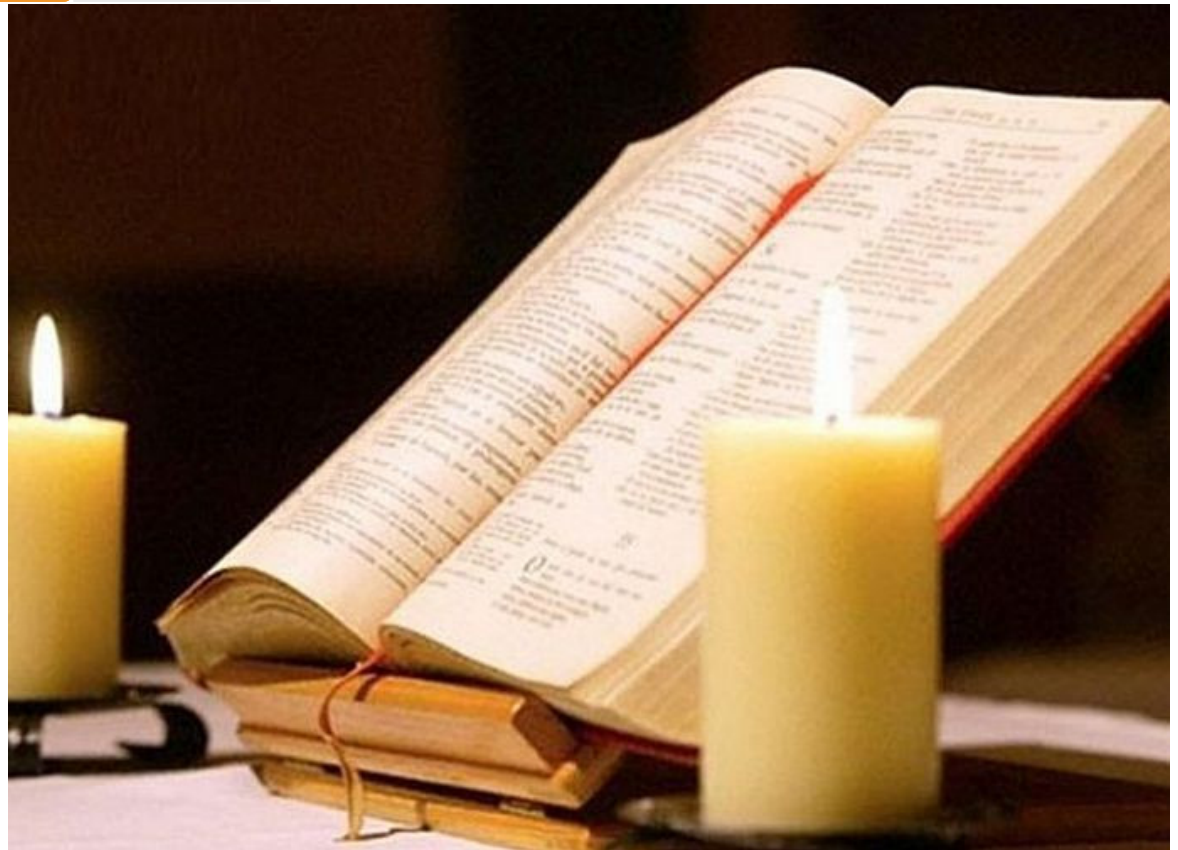


GOSPEL PEARLS

The State's Commandments

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Now when the Pharisees gathered around Jesus, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the

elders, but eat with defiled hands?" And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do." (Mark 7: 1-13)

Daily acts of hygiene must be performed out of respect for ourselves and for others, beginning with those who are humanly and physically near us. To a certain extent, proper hygiene can be considered an expression of love, since God commands us to love others as ourselves, no more and no less. Yet, if we do so in order to feel equal to God, then they distance us from Him, because they make us feel deceptively perfect. These days it seems that the Ten Commandments have been replaced by the commandments of the State which are all aimed at hygiene and health. We are commanded to wear masks, sanitize our hands, etc. They resemble the Pharisees' ritual rules in Jesus' time. Many today are convinced that going against these new commandments is more serious than violating God's Commandments. Since we can't serve two masters, then let's decide who we want to serve and whose commandments we want to obey. As Joshua said, we too are called to solemnly say: "As for me and my house, we want to serve the Lord."