

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jesus tells today's parable about a man with two sons immediately after a debate with the chief priests and elders. When they challenged his authority, Jesus asked them to make a public statement about their opinion of John the Baptist.

It may sound as if Jesus was trying to avoid the issue of his authority. He, however, was trying to get his questioners to be honest with themselves.

When they refused to be trapped into telling the truth, Jesus refused to answer their question about the source of his authority. He told this parable instead.

By this parable Jesus shows what he thought of the religious authorities. He considered them unworthy. They were like the second son in the parable who when his father asked to go out and work in the vineyard said in reply, 'Yes sir', but did not go.

The religious authorities considered tax collectors and prostitutes to be outside of God's covenant, but Jesus sees them entering the kingdom of God even before those who looked down on them because they believed and repented when they heard the exhortation of John the Baptist.

The tax collectors and prostitutes were like the first son who initially refused to do work in his father's vineyard but later changed his mind and went out into the vineyard.

The point is, promising to do something is not the same as doing it. There is a distinction between saying the right thing and doing the right thing.

As human beings sometimes we say **'yes'** with our lips while we say **'no'** with our action; our conduct.

At our baptism we promised to do God's will; to reject Satan and all his works and all his empty promises; we said yes to do God's work. We renew these promises every year during Easter vigil Mass.

Let us take time today and reflect on our lives and see if we are, indeed, doing what we have promised to do; if we are backing our promises by our actions. The **'I dos'** we said at our baptism and the reception of other sacraments like marriage must spring into action.

Ezekiel in the first reading tells us that what makes life real are the good relationships one has with God and others. So when he says in the reading that the virtuous will live and the wicked will die, he is talking about being alive to good relationships with God and others or cutting oneself off from it.

So what the Church is telling us today is that there is the possibility of being alive to good relationships with God and others if we repent.

To continue to be alive to good relationships with God and others St Paul tells us in the second reading that we should have the same attitude as Christ Jesus who emptied himself in obedience to the point of death and whom God honored by exalting him above every creature to the glory of God. That is, as Christians St Paul urges us to have a self-giving spirit which will help us to avoid saying **'yes'** with our lips while saying **'no'** with our conduct.