**September 27, 2020**

**26th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Ezekiel 18:25-28**

**Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9**

**Phil 2:1-11 or 2:1-5**

**Mt 21:28-32**

**OPENNESS OF THE HEART IN DOING HIS WILL!**

Last Sunday, we have heard the **Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard** and in the homily of Deacon Dave he emphasized how compassionate and generous the employer was.  Deacon Dave ended his homily by inviting us to be compassionate and generous, like the employer in the parable, to those who are really suffering due to this pandemic.

Today, we listened to another parable – **The Parable of the Two Sons**.  In this parable we were told that a man has two sons and requested them to work in the vineyard.  The first one said to his father, **“I will not!”** but later on changed his mind and went.  The second son, on the other hand, said: **“Yes, sir!”** but did not go.  End of the parable.  And then, the gospel continued with Jesus posing the question to his listeners, **“Which of the two did his father's will?"**His listeners replied with a correct answer by saying: **“The first.”**

Let us take a look at the persons or actors in the parable.  The two sons were both imperfect.  The denial of the **first son** to work in the vineyard embarrassed his father.  On the contrary, the lie of the **second son** showed how he disrespected his father’s position. What the two did to their father was truly hurtful.  **Why?**  It was hurtful to the father because he was a good father to them, providing them food, lodging, and everything they needed.  The father knew that all his possessions will be for his sons including the vineyard.  He was expecting them to show gratitude, loyalty, and honor by sharing their time doing work in the vineyard.  Instead, what he got from his sons were embarrassment, ingratitude, betrayal, and disrespect when he asked them to work in the vineyard.

The parable was presented by Jesus to the chief priests and the elders of the people.  They were shocked to hear Jesus say to them: **"Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.  When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did.  Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him."**This statement of Jesus was shocking to them because they were compared to the ‘**second son’** who did not do the will of his father.  The tax collectors and prostitutes were the **‘first son’** who changed his mind and heart to do the will of his father.  This was shocking to the chief priests and elders of the people because Jesus broke their belief that their social standing and moral background will make them first in entering the kingdom of God.  They were wrong.  Jesus made it clear to them that change of mind and heart is what matters to God, not social standing, educational attainment, material possessions, nor moral background.  **The key to entering the kingdom is the openness to change the heart and mind to do the will of God**.  This is what the tax collectors and prostitutes did – they repented and opened their minds and hearts in response to the Good News they heard.

The parable was presented by Jesus to the chief priests and the elders of the people, by extension, it is presented to us now.  The parable conveys to us that the **father** symbolizes **God,** and the **two sons** represent **us**.  Hence, the Lord Jesus, through this parable, is reiterating to us that, no matter how imperfect we are like the two sons, we can still enter his kingdom.  We only have to repent and open our hearts and minds to do his will.  Again, the key is in doing God’s will.  It is not enough to have good intentions. Remember the adage/maxim that says: **promises don’t count unless they are performed**.

Let me illustrate it by sharing with you a story.

A young priest decided to make a survey to his parishioners to help him make a parish plan.  He chose to distribute the survey in all the Masses.  One of the questions in the survey was, **“Do you think there should be an evening Bible Study?”**  The young priest got back the survey and was overwhelmed at the response.  Over fifty (50) persons indicated that there should be an evening Bible study.  The elated young priest began making plans.  Two days later, the wise, experienced lay leader came to visit the young priest.  Gently he advised the young man that he had asked the wrong question.  The lay leader said, **“Father, instead of asking, “Do you think there should be a Bible study?” I do suggest that you asked, “Are you willing to attend an evening Bible study?”**

The young priest listened and so a second questionnaire was issued.  This time the question was, **“Are you willing to attend Bible study?”**  The result was quite different from the week before.  This time only twelve (12) persons indicated that they would be willing to attend.

The point of the story is clear – only 12 people were willing to **follow through** or **act on** their good intentions while the 38 people lingered on not doing anything about their intentions.  The **former**performed their promises while the **latter** maintained their promises as promises.

**Where are we now in our personal relationship with Jesus?  Can we honestly say that we are now ‘performing our promises’ received in baptism?  Are our hearts and minds more open now in doing God’s will?**

In baptism, we have promised that we will reject Satan and all his works and all his empty promises.  At the same time, we promised that we will give witness to Jesus Christ.  I would like to suggest the following as our way of giving witness to our faith in Jesus Christ; our way of ‘performing our promises’: **Commit yourself to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.  Know more about him.  Love his presence in the Holy Eucharist.  Share the Good News to others and begin it in your family.  Teach and practice the faith.  Model the faith to your kids.  Always be grateful.  Count your blessings.   Reach out to those in need.  Pray for them.  Give them a call.  Send them a card.  Stop cursing.  Stop gossiping.    Let the mouth that receives the Body of Christ be the mouthpiece of Christ in the world and nothing else.**  These are just some of the ways we can do to give witness to our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we continue our Mass, we pray for the gift of humility to repent and the gift of courage to give witness to the faith by consistently doing His will.