

HOMILY FOR THE XXVI SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

Ez 18:25-28; Phil 2:1-11; Mt 21:28-32

Today's Scripture passages remind us that what ultimately matters is our final response to God. It is not simply what we say, what we promise, or even how we begin our journey of faith, but how we finally respond to God and live out that response in our daily lives.

In the first reading, the Lord God, through the prophet Ezekiel, challenges two beliefs that were common among His people. The first was that children inherit the guilt of their ancestors and are punished for their sins. The second was that God is more interested in strict justice than in mercy. Through Ezekiel, God makes it clear that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. We are not condemned because of somebody else's sins, nor are we prevented from beginning again because of our past.

The Jewish people in exile were asking, in effect, *"Our ancestors sinned, but we are the ones who are suffering. How can God be fair?"* God's answer is that His mercy is always greater than our failures. He does not hold our past against us when we genuinely turn back to Him. In that sense, if God is "not fair" according to our human understanding of fairness, it is actually good news for us! God gives us another chance. He allows us to begin again. He is always ready to welcome the sinner who sincerely returns to Him.

Today's Gospel presents us with the familiar parable of the two sons. A father asks his first son to go and work in the vineyard. The son says, "No," but later changes his mind and goes. The father asks the second son, and he immediately says, "Certainly, sir," but he does not go. The important point is that, in both cases, the final decision is what matters. The first son initially says "no", but later changes his mind and does what his father asks. The second son says "yes", but his actions do not match his words.

Jesus uses this parable to challenge the religious leaders of His time. The tax collectors and prostitutes, who were considered public sinners, were like the first son. They had said "no" to God through their way of life, but when John the Baptist called them to repentance, many of them changed their lives and turned back to God. The chief priests and elders, on the other hand, were like the second son. They appeared outwardly religious and said "yes" to God, but they refused to listen to John and ultimately rejected Jesus. The message is very simple: **our actions must speak louder than our words**. It is not enough to say that we believe in God. Our faith must be visible in the way we live, in the way we treat others, in the way we forgive, and in the way we care for those who are in need.

This parable reminds us that promises can never take the place of performance, and fine words are never a substitute for good deeds. The Christian faith is not simply something we profess with our lips; it is something we practise with our lives. We cannot say "yes" to God on Sunday and then say "no" to Him throughout the rest of the week. We cannot say that we love God while refusing to forgive, refusing to help, or refusing to reach out to someone who needs us. God does not want merely polite words or outward appearances. He wants a sincere heart and a life that reflects our faith. At the same time, the wonderful message of the Gospel is that even when we

have said “no” to God, it is never too late to turn back. God is merciful and quick to forgive. He never abandons us, even when we have wandered away from Him. He is always ready to receive us when we return with a repentant heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps we can all identify with the first son in today’s Gospel. At times, we too say “no” to God. We may fail, we may become weak, we may make wrong choices, and we may sometimes turn away from what we know is right. But the important thing is not to remain there. We can always come back. We can always begin again.

There are many “first sons” in our world today: people who have made mistakes but have turned their lives around; people who have struggled with addiction but have found a new beginning; people who have been away from the Church but have slowly returned to their faith; people who quietly serve others without seeking recognition; and ordinary men and women who, despite their weaknesses, try to live according to the Gospel. Perhaps, in one way or another, **we are all a little bit like that first son.** We have our weaknesses, but we also have the grace to change. God continues to call each one of us to work in His vineyard.

The first reading reminds us that each one of us is responsible before God for our own choices. And because we do not know when our earthly journey will come to an end, the best preparation for that final moment is to live each day in God’s friendship. So, how can we say “yes” to God in practical terms? We can begin each morning by offering our day to Him. We can make an effort to forgive someone who has hurt us. We can visit someone who is lonely. We can offer a helping hand to a neighbour. We can speak a kind word instead of a harsh one. We can come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we have fallen. And, above all, we can try to make our actions match the faith we profess with our lips.

God is calling us today, just as the father called his two sons: *“Go and work in my vineyard.”* His vineyard is our family, our parish, our workplace, our neighbourhood, and the people we meet every day. Let us not simply say, *“Yes, Lord,”* with our lips. Let us say “yes” through our lives. Let our faith be seen not merely in our words or pious gestures, but in our kindness, forgiveness, generosity and love.

And when we sometimes fail and we will let us remember that God does not close the door on us. He gives us another opportunity to return to Him. May the Lord give us the humility to recognise our mistakes, the courage to change, and the grace to say a sincere and wholehearted **“Yes”** to Him not only in words, but in our daily lives. **Amen.**