

# OCTOBER 1, 2017

## Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**READING 1 EZ 18:25-28**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM PS 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9**

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R. (6a) **Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

**READING 2 PHIL 2:1-11**

**GOSPEL MT 21:28-32**

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Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:

"What is your opinion?

A man had two sons.

He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'

He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards changed his mind and went.

The man came to the other son and gave the same order.

He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go.

Which of the two did his father's will?"

They answered, "The first."

Jesus said 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."

### HOMILY:

One blistering-hot day, a mother had invited some relatives for dinner. When they arrived, she expressed her happiness they had come and how good it was to see them. When they all sat down for the meal, the mother asked her 4-year old son to offer the meal prayer. "But I don't know what to say!" the boy complained. "Oh, just say what you hear me say" his mother replied. Obediently the boy bowed his head and mumbled, "Oh Lord, why did I invite these people over on a hot day like this?"

At first this seems like a terribly embarrassing story—the mother, who has welcomed her guests, expressed her gratitude for them coming, and has laid out a presumably delicious meal after much effort, has been “outed” by her son that she was not actually very enthusiastic about a hot stove on a hot day. And, in some ways, it would be embarrassing! But . . . looking deeper we can see there is more to the story than first appears. For, of course we’ve all been in situations where we’ve made offers and invitations to care for others or to offer hospitality to others, only

to discover that, when the day has arrived, we are tired, or would rather be doing something else, or it's hot, or I'm not feeling well, or . . . plenty of other things. And yet, in the story of the woman cooking for her relatives on the hot day, what are not important are her words, uttered in frustration, but her actions—that she, despite the heat, cared enough for her relatives that she cooked the meal, set the table, and welcomed her guests. That she did not feel like it, yet she chose the love of hospitality anyway, reveals something not embarrassing, but noble! Over 2000 years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle set down the principle: “Don't listen to what another says, but trust in what they do.” And, the principle is still good: actions truly do speak louder than words.

And . . . the same principle is at the heart of the Christian faith. Today's parable by Jesus speaks this truth—that it's what we ultimately do that is important—not what we say we'll do or not do. In the parable, the father has two sons, both of whom he asks to work in the vineyard. The first, we hear, at first SAYS he will not go, but later repents and does. The second, on the other hand, glibly says that he will go, but his actions don't later reflect his words and he actually does not go.

Does this mean our word is not important? No—but what is most important are our actions, rather than our thoughts or feelings. Maybe I think another is annoying, but I still ACT towards them with respect. BINGO—success! Maybe I feel another has a grating personality, and yet I ACT towards them with understanding and kindness. BINGO—success. Maybe I don't want to be patient with a difficult person at work—and yet I do ACT with patience. BINGO—success.

Of course, we want our words, thoughts and feelings to be consistent with our faith, but when they are not, what matters is that our actions are consistent with our faith. The English Theologian C.S. Lewis famously wrote in his book *Mere Christianity*, “The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did.” Or in the words of Jesus, when the father has asked us to go into His vineyard of love and mercy, and we SAY at times we don't want to be loving and merciful, what is most important is that we actually do go and ACT with love and mercy. For, love is not a thought or a feeling, but an action, when we choose to deny ourselves and act for the good of the other.

For Jesus teaches us: it is not important when we think, “I don't know why I have to love others on this hot day, this tired day, this busy day.” What is important is that we ACT to love them anyway. Acts of love—these are what the Lord requires.