

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- We're all interested in prioritizing our lives...
 - in figuring out what's most important and vital.
- No...I'm not talking about...what to watch on Sunday afternoons.
 - The Broncos season...has already tanked.
 - Choose something else!
- No...I'm talking about what's most important when it comes to our lives of faith.
 - Some aspects are foundational...
 - while others are built upon them.
 - So if you don't have a solid foundation...
 - everything else is going to fall.
- For example:
 - Words are important aren't they?
 - They can break hearts...ruin lives...even start wars.
 - But they can also soothe broken hearts...give back life to the lonely...
 - and three little words: *"I love you,"*
 - those words can fill a heart with meaning...purpose...
 - and even salvation...when they're accepted from our Lord.
 - But when it comes to our lives of faith...
 - words are secondary...not primary.
- Another secondary thing...is having a correct understanding.
 - The Pharisees in our Gospel...
 - had an absolutely...correct understanding...of the faith...
 - they gave exact answer...
 - that Jesus was looking for.
 - But they remained farther from heaven...
 - than prostitutes and tax collectors.
- So what is foundational?
 - Well one of them has to be honesty...especially with ourselves.
 - Words and understanding...mean absolutely nothing without it.
 - Sin...we must remember...
 - originates with the Father of Lies...
 - and when we lie to ourselves...
 - that's when we really get into trouble.
- In our Gospel...
 - one brother tell his father: *"Yes, I'll do the work."*
 - while the other one said: *"Not me."*
 - Notice how both used words...that were contrary to their actions.
 - One had zero intention of working...
 - but he at least had the integrity to say so.
 - He was wrong...but honest.
 - And in the end...he's the one...who did his father's will.

- The other brother was the exact opposite.
 - He said what the father wanted to hear...
 - but not what he was willing to do.
 - How many times...do we pray like that?
 - We say words that we think the Lord wants to hear...
 - and on the surface we feel great...
 - but deep down...we know full well...
 - we're never going to live them out.
 - Really...we need to be fearlessly and courageously honest with God...and ourselves.
 - I've shared with you a few times...the famous prayer of St. Augustine:
 - *"Lord make me chaste...but not quite yet."*
 - Without honesty like that...we're doomed...
 - particularly in our struggle with sin.
 - Because we've all been there...asking the Lord...
 - *"Take this temptation away."*
 - But then we give in...again.
 - And whether our favorite sin is...
 - pride, greed...anger or lust...gluttony, envy or sloth...
 - we give in...again and again.
 - We pray: *"Save me Lord! I don't want to do it."*
 - So why doesn't that prayer...ever seem to work?
 - It's because something's...foundationally wrong.
 - We're probably not being honest with ourselves.
 - So what's really going on in our hearts?
 - Well...if we're honest...there are times when we want to sin.
 - Not always.
 - But if we're honest...we'll at least admit...that our hearts are divided.
 - I think what our fallen nature wants the most...
 - is to be able to both sin...
 - whatever our favorite sin is...
 - but then also...to be able to serve the Lord...
 - and to do it...all at the same time.
 - We want the best of both worlds.
 - But as Jesus said...
 - you cannot serve both God and mammon.
 - In the end...
 - there can be only one choice...one eternal decision.

- So let's be honest with our desires...
 - and take a leap of faith...
 - coming before the Lord...
 - with defenses down...
 - admitting our weakness...
 - right upfront:
 - *"Lord help me! I want to give in to this sin.*
 - *You know my heart. You know it's divided.*
 - *So heal my heart.*
 - *Give me a heart...that longs to do...your will alone."*

- When we come before the Lord like that...in utter poverty...
 - then the strength...
 - of even the most powerful temptations...
 - will wither...before the face...of Almighty God!
 - And we'll get to experience...first hand...
 - what St. Paul was talking about:
 - *"When I am weak...then I am strong."*

- So talk is cheap...
 - intentions are too often...little more than wishful thinking.
 - And being honest...
 - and then acting with integrity...
 - that's a tough thing to do.
 - It's actually...
 - one of the hardest...
 - and most demanding things about our faith.
 - But it's the *narrow way*...
 - that Jesus told us about.
 - So let's pick up our Cross...
 - and follow after Him.