

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A-2020)
St. Patrick - Milford

We just heard about the man with the two sons one of whom told his father he would work as his father had requested and then did not // the other having said “no” to his father and then changed his mind and did what his father asked him to do. What changed that son’s mind? Was it shame? or guilt? I suspect it was the latter, his sense of guilt.

All of us have regrets, memories of unkind or hurtful or things we've done ... of the times when we saw someone and need and looked the other way. All of us have feelings of guilt. We'd all like the chance to go back and do the right thing ... or do certain things over again, or to right the wrongs we've done. What, then, do we do with our guilt?

In today’s parable, Jesus gives us a sense of direction. The truth is that guilt, remorse, and regret can be very powerful and potentially useful emotions. They can move us away from wasting our gifts, abusing other people, along with powerful motivation to do the right thing and make our lives and the lives around us much happier and fulfilled.

The word “responsibility” is made up from 2 words: ability and respond. There are moments of kindness, tenderness, and compassion that I may not have shared with those who needed those things from me. I have not been as courageous as I could have been. I may have shunned valor, missed opportunities to lead, passed by opportunities and moments of truth, avoided conflicts that would have changed people for the better, and not done what God had given me the opportunity to do. Moreover, some of us have blamed others and used the bad example of others as an excuse. I may have appealed to the empty phrase: "Everybody's doing it", and even decreed certain things not to be sinful, things that God has clearly told us are truly sinful.

The popular definition of insanity goes like this: "To keep on doing the same things in the same way, while expecting a different result each time," It is insane to regret what we've done or haven't done and yet keep on doing what we're doing or not doing? Truly, the only sensible thing to do with our regrets, our remorse, and our guilt is to change the way we act. That's the simple message of Jesus' parable.

Because of his sense of guilt, the second son faced his shame and expressed regret and went to work. "Regret" was something he felt deep down within his heart and soul. He put this ego aside and did what was right. You and I are loved sinners or, as St. Augustine said,: We are saints and sinner at the same time. God sent His only-begotten Son, not to condemn but to save the sinner. It's only when we admit to God, to ourselves, and to others the exact nature of our wrongs that we can begin to get in touch with reality and move away from avoidance and denial. Once freed from these, we can live and move and do what is right, what is decent and what is good.

Here we are, gathered around the table of the Lord and Jesus is about to come down to earth once again right here on this altar to give you and to give me the Bread of Life ... the bread and keeps us healthy and sane in body, mind, and Spirit ... the bread that gives us the power we need to accomplish His work here on earth as it is in heaven.

And so, if, in your prayer today, you hear that God is asking something from us or is asking us to go and work for him at home, at work or at school ... what will we do? Will our response bring us shame and guilt OR will our response bring us to experience the freedom of love – and live as a true daughter or son of God.