

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time A 2020

Who is better in the Gospel? The first who said ‘no’ but in the end, fulfilled his father’s wish? Or the one who said ‘yes’ but later, did nothing? Just like in the Gospel, our answer would be the first one who said ‘no’ but in the end, did fulfill his father’s wish. This may seem to be an easy choice for us because he was the one who did what was asked of him. But it is good for us to put this situation in perspective and connect it in real life. Who is better, a discourteous husband who does not drink or a drunkard who is truly kind when sober? Who is better, a nagging wife who runs the home efficiently or a disorderly wife who is very affectionate? Who is better, a church-going Catholic who is a dictator at home or a fallen-away Catholic who is close to his children? Who is better, a couple married in the church that have regular quarrels or a couple that lives together without the blessing of the sacrament but is happy? Who is better, a pious Christian who always pray but unbecoming in his lifestyle or a person who does not pray but very accommodating? We would probably have no clear choice for an answer on these situations or some could probably choose the lesser evil as we say. Whatever it is for us, we have to admit that none of these situations are acceptable ways of conduct. We can say that no one is better than the others just in the case of the two sons in the Gospel. The two sons both caused their father pain and rejection – the one, at the beginning and the other one, at the end. Both could have been better sons by giving their whole-hearted “Yes” kindly and carrying out the order efficiently and not the other way around by which the ‘no’ of the first son turned into ‘yes’ and the ‘yes’ of the second one became a ‘no’. The true Christian should be better than both. What one says, one must do. There should be consistency in our words and actions. The best testimony for what we believe is how we live. Our actions and our words should always show what we genuinely believe.

However, I will be the first one to admit that I sometimes fail on this regard in my life. At times, I do not walk my talk. Sometimes I fail to practice what I preach. I believe that this happens to all of us. We can say along with St. Paul in the second reading today, “Jesus is Lord!” But the question we must ask ourselves is, “Is Jesus really the Lord of our life?” Do we truly practice what he teaches? Do we adhere to what he values? Or do we just choose and pick what we like? Or do we just take them for granted and look the other way? We can see this by looking at our priorities in life. Do we spend more attention and effort at work than with our family and friends? Do we put our own interests and needs first before others? Do we prefer watching games on the television rather than going to mass? Or at this time of the Pandemic, do we favor more the convenience of watching mass on the television rather than going to mass in person even if we are not compromised and can easily go just as when go to the grocery stores or restaurants? Well, that is just me gently inviting you to sign up for mass if you have been up and about and just checking if Catholic guilt truly works, right? 😊

But kidding aside, our Gospel today is actually showing us what Catholic guilt should be – it is about becoming better in our lives. Upon realizing that he has done a mistake and is slacking, the first son went and did what was asked of him by his Father. Just like the two sons in our Gospel today, there will be times in our lives where we will forget, take for granted or even dismiss the call of God to prioritize Him in our lives. But the thing that we must keep in our hearts is that God will always be there to love us and forgive us in our lives, always inviting us to come to the vineyard. Yes, we will fall and make mistakes but there are always opportunities for us to make

things right in our lives and our relationships.

So as we continue to make choices in our lives and in our faith, let us commit to becoming better as a person, as community and as a society. We can say that both sons in the Gospel are not in a way, good sons or perfect sons. But despite of our shortcomings and limitations, we are all called to change our hearts just like the first son and strive to do good rather than remain mediocre or care less about our faith and commitments. We are saved by how we progress as a person. Yes, all of us are imperfect in our ways in one way or another, but just like the first brother, there is an inherent quality in us to grow. And so, let us strive to make ourselves better. Let us not choose to regress just like the second brother. We are meant to grow. We are meant to be better persons. That is who we are and that is what we need to strive to do. And so, let us ask the Lord to guide and strengthen us in our lives. May He be with us today as we strive to talk our talk and walk our walk. Amen.