

GOSPEL
Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first' they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS
1 October 2023

Today, the Gospel speaks about two sons, whose father asks them to go to work in the vineyard (cf. Mt 21:28-32). One of them responds "yes", right away, but then does not go. The other one instead, says "no", but then repents and goes.

What is there to say about the behaviour of these two? What quickly comes to mind is that going to work in the vineyard requires sacrifice, and making sacrifices is demanding. It does not come naturally, even with the beauty of knowing they are sons and heirs. But the problem here is not so much linked to a resistance to going to work in the vineyard, as much as it is to sincerity, or lack thereof, with the father and with themselves. Even though neither of the sons behaves impeccably; one lies, while the other one makes a mistake but remains sincere.

Let us look at the son who says "yes", but then does not go. He does not want to do the father's will, but neither does he want to get into a discussion or talk about it. Thus, he hides behind a "yes", behind a false compliance that conceals his laziness, and he saves face for the time being. He is a hypocrite. He gets by without conflict, but he cheats and disappoints his father, disrespecting him in a way that is worse than if he had responded with a blunt "no". The problem with those who behave this way is that they are not only sinners, but also corrupt, because they lie without

difficulty to cover up and disguise their disobedience, rejecting any honest dialogue or feedback.

The other son, instead, who said "no" but then went, is sincere. He is not perfect, but sincere. Certainly, it would have been nice to hear him say "yes" right away. That did not happen, but at least he shows his reluctance honestly and, in a certain sense, courageously. That is, he takes responsibility for his behaviour and acts out in the open. Then, with this basic honesty, he ends up questioning himself until he understands he has made a mistake and retraces his steps. We could say he is a sinner, but he is not corrupt. Pay close attention to this: this son is a sinner, but he is not corrupt. And there is always hope of redemption for a sinner. For the corrupt on the other hand, it is much more difficult. In fact, the corrupt person's false "yesses", elegant but hypocritical façades and habitual false pretences, are like a thick "rubber wall", behind which to take cover from qualms of conscience. And these hypocrites do so much evil! Brothers and sisters, sinners yes — we all are — corrupt no! Sinners yes, corrupt no!

Let us now look at ourselves and, in the light of all this, ask ourselves some questions. When faced with the difficulty of living an honest and generous life, of dedicating myself to the Father's will, am I willing to say "yes" each day, even if it is demanding? And when I fail, am I sincere before God about my difficulties, my failings, my weaknesses? And when I say "no", do I turn around after? Let us speak with the Lord about this. When I make a mistake, am I willing to repent and retrace my steps? Or do I pretend everything is okay and go through life wearing a mask, concerning myself only with appearing good and righteous? Finally, am I a sinner, like everyone, or is there something corrupt in me? Do not forget: sinners yes, corrupt no.

May Mary, mirror of holiness, help us be sincere Christians.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Pope Francis distinguishes between the sinner who is honest about their failures and the person who hides behind appearances. Why is sincerity so important in the Christian life?



Heart: Where are you most tempted to say “yes” to God outwardly while resisting him inwardly? What would honest prayer about that look like?



Hands: Pope Francis reminds us that there is always hope for the sinner who is willing to turn back. Is there one area of your life where God may be inviting you to stop pretending and take a concrete step of repentance?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.