

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



"What is your opinion?"

Reading 1 Ezekiel 18:25-28

Thus says the LORD: You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:

Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?

When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.

But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, and does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths,
guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. **R**

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old.
The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD. **R**

Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way. **R**

Reading 2 Philippians 2:1-5

Brothers and sisters:

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love,
any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy,
complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love,
united in heart, thinking one thing.

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory;
rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,
each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Matthew 21:28-32

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."



FOR JESUS, THE LAST ARE THE FIRST

Jesus knew a society divided by barriers of separation and pierced with complex discriminations. In it we find Jews who can enter the temple, and pagans excluded from the ritual; «pure» people with whom you could deal, and «impure» ones you had to avoid; «neighbors» you ought to love, and «un-neighbors» you could abandon; «pious» men who observe the law, and «cursed people» who don't know or fulfill what's written; «healthy» people blessed by God, and «sick ones» cursed and without access to the temple; «just» people, and men and women who are «sinners».

Jesus' action in this society ends up so surprising that still today we resist accepting it. He doesn't adopt the posture of the groups of Pharisees, who avoid all contact with the impure and sinners. He doesn't follow the elitist attitude of Qumran, where precise lists are drawn up of those who remain excluded from the community.

Jesus precisely comes close to those who are most discriminated against. He sits down to eat with publicans. He lets his feet be kissed by a woman sinner. He touches the lepers with his hand. He seeks to save «what is lost». The people call him «friend of sinners». With provocative insistence he goes about repeating that «the last will be the first», and that the publicans and prostitutes are going ahead of the Scribes and the priests on the way to God's reign.

Who today really suspects the alcoholics, homeless, beggars, and all those who make up the dregs of society can be the first before God? Who dares to think that the prostitutes, drug addicts or those affected by SIDA are able to go in front of quite a few church people of stainless life?

Yet, though almost no one would say it, you dear ones, the undesirables and anathematized, must know that the God revealed in Jesus Christ really remains your friend. You are able to «understand» and welcome God's forgiveness better than many Christians who don't feel the need to repent of anything.

When we avoid you, God comes close to you. When we humiliate you, God defends you. When we despise you, God welcomes you. In your darkest night you aren't alone. In your deepest humiliation, you aren't abandoned. There's no place for you in our society or in our heart. That's precisely why you have a privileged place in God's heart.

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