

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 27, 2020

“...humbly regard others as more important
than yourselves....”

Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 2:3

Choices. Do The Right Thing. That’s what the readings move us to consider this weekend. And the “right thing” most times is about the Common Good.

Our passage from the Prophet Ezekiel starts with the complaint that God’s way is “not fair.” When the people complain that God’s way is not fair, they are actually protesting the fact that they have to live with the results of their free choices. Paul advises the Philippians to drop our self-importance and see the needs of others. In our parable from Matthew, Jesus tells of a brother who says “no” to his father but does “yes,” and another brother who says “yes Lord” and intentionally does “no” thing.

What makes life real are the relationships one has with God and with others. The tragedy of death is the loss of those life-giving relationships. Thus, when the prophet Ezekiel says that the virtuous will live and the wicked will die, he’s talking about being alive to a relationship with God or cutting oneself off from that relationship.

Why would one ever want to turn from good to evil? It’s hard to imagine what would cause anyone to abandon good if they knew the joy of relationship with God. But, if somebody was “doing good” were more a matter of appearance than relationship, if one was simply seeking reward or comfort, then doing good might not pay enough dividends. The person who abandons virtue may have never been virtuous in the first place, but rather self-seeking in a way that appeared honorable. On the other hand, when people turn from folly and shallowness and seek the righteousness of a living relationship with God, they have opened themselves to everything that life has to offer.

The beauty of this teaching is that as long as we live, we are capable of growth, of receiving the life God desires to give us. The hidden promise of this teaching is that even if one's commitment to good is so shallow as to be lost, that person still has a chance to come back.

Meanwhile, if we interpret today's parable in its cultural context it becomes more complex than it appears at first glance. Culturally, the first son was a rude rebel. In a society where saving face was highly valued, the son who said "I will not," wounded his father's dignity and shattered his family's reputation. He effectively put himself outside the family circle. In contrast, the second son honored the father, even to the point of addressing him as "lord." Any observer would have seen that son as exceeding the ideal of filial respect.

Then comes the twist. The deferential son had only a veneer of respect for his father. He might keep things pleasant in the house, but the family business would fall apart under his do-nothing lifestyle. The insolent son actually demonstrated more family commitment than his hypocritical brother. Far from perfect, he was the one who repented. (The word translated as "changed his mind" is translated as repent in other passages and comes from the same root as *metanoia*, which means "conversion".)

With this parable, Jesus pointed out the distinction between what might be called orthodoxy and orthopraxis, between saying the right thing and doing the right thing. His implication was that saying the right thing, outwardly following the rules, can become nothing more than a façade, leaving a people who look good but accomplish nothing for God. In contrast, doing the right thing will lead to understanding what is right and being able to say it as well. As Scriptural commentator Sister Verna Holyhead writes: "Mere ritual acceptance of the good news, like words mouthed but not lived, is worthless unless it bears fruit."

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Prelude: Sing along with "I Got a Feelin'" sung by Albertina Walker:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q-x-6pKi-k>

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you call us to live responsibly and faithfully:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to consider others above ourselves:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to rejoice in God's constant forgiveness:

Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer

O God,
you alone judge rightly and
search the depths of the heart.
Make us swift to do your will^{[[SEP]]}
and slow to judge our neighbor,
that we may walk with those^{[[SEP]]} who follow
the way of repentance and faith
and so enter your heavenly kingdom.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,^{[[SEP]]}
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.

LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN.

Before moving to this Sunday's Scripture selections, listen to this centering anthem, "Music in the Air," sung in a 1970 Tanglewood Music Festival concert by The Voices of East Harlem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUFRjJKZX1Q>

**Readings Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
September 27, 2020**

1st Reading – Ezekiel 18:25-28

Thus says the LORD:^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]25 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?

^[L]^[L]^[L]26 When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.

^[L]^[L]^[L]27 But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life;

^[L]^[L]^[L]28 since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm – 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

^[L]^[L]^[L]4 Your ways, O LORD,
make known to me;^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
teach me your paths.^[L]_[SEP]

^[L]^[L]^[L]5 guide me in your truth and teach me,^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
for you are God my savior.^[L]_[SEP]

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

^[L]^[L]^[L]6 Remember that your compassion, O LORD,^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
and your love are from of old.^[L]_[SEP]

^[L]^[L]^[L]7 The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not,^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
in your kindness remember me,^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
because of your goodness, O LORD.^[L]_[SEP]

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

^[L]^[L]^[L]8 Good and upright is the LORD;^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
thus he shows sinners the way.^[L]_[SEP]

^[L]^[L]^[L]9 He guides the humble to justice,^[L]_[SEP]^[L]^[L]^[L]
and teaches the humble his way.^[L]_[SEP]

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Philippians 2:1-11

Brothers and sisters:¹ If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy,² complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.

³ Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,⁴ each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.

⁵ Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus,⁶ Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

⁷ Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance,⁸ he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name¹⁰ which is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Gospel – Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: ²⁸ “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.’

²⁹ He said in reply, ‘I will not, ‘ but afterwards changed his mind and went.

³⁰ The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, ‘Yes, sir, ‘but did not go.

³¹ 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.

³² 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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.....Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Prompts:

First, listen to “Wonderful Is Your Name” by Hezekiah Walker & the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4v4CXFI6TiQ>

- Have you ever said “no” initially to a request to minister or council, and then switched to “yes”? Discuss.
- To what have you said “yes” to in your life? How is that visible in your actions?
- To what has the faith community at Lourdes said “yes” to? How is that visible in our collective actions?
- Is there something in your life that makes you feel discouraged and trapped? What are you going to do about it?
- To what extent is your hope grounded in God? Does that grounding help you to change when and if change is needed in your life?

Meditation Prompts:

Paul writes to the Philippians that Jesus has “emptied himself” and “humbled himself.”

- Take a moment of quiet and ask yourselves what does Christ’s self-emptying “yes” ask of you now?
- What are you called to be and do?

Hear Walter Hawkin’s chorale share the classic “Jesus Christ is the Way”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLjyQccHe_4

Then move into the intercessions.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – September 27, 2020

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Presider: God of tender mercies, you enfold us in your faithful love. Hear our cries for justice and healing.

Worship Leader

1. For the church to be faithful to its mission to embrace sinners and seek out the lost. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.** (ASSEMBLY RESPONDS: **Show us mercy, O God.**)

2. For the wisdom to live simply, appreciate beauty and behold the face of Jesus in one another. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
3. For our Jewish brothers and sisters, who today are observing the high holy Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
4. For heeding God's call to us to care for the earth, and renew it with good food, fresh water, clean air, and renewable energy. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
5. For all those around the world who have been driven from their homelands by violence and poverty on this World Day of Migrants and Refugees. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
6. For all those who are unemployed, underemployed or underpaid, that they find the work they seek with humane benefits. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
7. For commitments and actions to renew the face of the Earth with clean soil, water and air for future generations. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
8. For healing and peace of mind for Sandra Turner. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
9. For our Stephen Ministry, its leaders, and all Care Team members and receivers here at Lourdes. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
10. For all our loved ones in the military and their families, that they be returned to us safely and experience a welcoming community. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**
11. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those listed in our bulletin, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**

12. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially David Gholston, Randall Kenan, and Chadwick Boseman for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**

13. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Show us mercy, O God.**

Presider: God of compassion, help us to remember that you love what is right, just and humble. Show us how to live as you call us to live. We humbly ask this in the name of your beloved Son, Jesus. LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN!

Sing or recite “The Lord’s Prayer.” Then, hear “Perfect Praise” sung by Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJE7gFpujdl>

Closing Prayer

God of heaven and earth, your almighty power is shown above all in your willingness to forgive and show mercy; let your grace descend upon us without ceasing, that we may strive for the things you have promised and come to share the treasures of heaven.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Let the Church say.....AMEN!

Closing: Hear another version of “I’ve Got a Feelin’” sung by Eddie Ruth Bradford: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJE7gFpujdl>