

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

GOSPEL

Jerusalem Bible © 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Company Inc.

Jesus said to the chief priests and 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 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.'

(Matthew 21:28-32)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The 'chief priests and elders' are the leaders of the Jewish religious community. They were the ones with training and were learned in the Scriptures. They should have known and recognised what is from God, but they are like the son who says 'yes' and fails to carry out God's will.
- Prostitutes and tax collectors are often bracketed together because both were considered 'sinners'—prostitutes for their sexual behaviour, and tax collectors because they cooperated with the Roman authorities and cheated their own people.

EXPLORING THE WORD

A great deal has happened since last week's gospel reading in the lectionary. Jesus is now in Jerusalem. He has entered the city (Matthew 21:1-11) and has taken possession of the temple, driving out those who corrupt his Father's house (Matthew 21:12-17). The crisis point of Jesus' ministry has arrived, and he will enter into conflict with the established religious authorities.

The point of this text is that it is not the 'conventionally religious'—those who mouth all the right words and go through the rituals—who will enter the kingdom. Instead it is the ones who, by their actions, carry out God's will and become the sons and daughters of God.

John the Baptist, like Jesus himself, not only preached righteousness; he lived it. Jesus describes him as 'a pattern of true righteousness' (Matthew 21:32), and it was the broken people, the tax collectors and prostitutes, who accepted what he had to bring. They believed in him, repented and experienced a change of heart and life.

- Are there leaders in our society who should recognise what is right but do not?
- Are there leaders in our society who pay lip service to the truth but fail to act on it?
- At this point in your journey, what do you think is God's will for you?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Have you ever failed to recognise the truth of a situation?
- Have you ever said you were going to do something but then neglected to do it? How did you feel about breaking the promise?
- Share stories of times when you have said 'yes' to something without the intention of actually doing it. Or of a time you felt pressured to agree to something when you wanted to say 'no'. Or of failing to do something when you knew you should act.
- Pray this little prayer often this week:

*When our words say 'yes' but our actions say 'no',
forgive us Lord.*

*When our words say 'no' but our actions say 'yes',
encourage us Lord,*

*so that our response to you might be perfect in word
and deed.*

