

Sunday 26th (A) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 21,28-32): Jesus went on to say to the chief priests and the elders of the people, «What do you think of this? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said to him: ‘Son, today go and work in my vineyard’. And the son answered: ‘I don't want to’. But later he thought better of it and went. Then the father went to the second and gave him the same command. This son replied: ‘I will go, sir’, but he did not go.

»Which of the two did what the father wanted?«. They answered, «The first». And Jesus said to them, «Truly, I say to you: the publicans and the prostitutes are ahead of you on the way to the kingdom of heaven. For John came to show you the way of goodness but you did not believe him, yet the publicans and the prostitutes did. You were witnesses of this, but you neither repented nor believed him».

«Which of the two did what the father wanted?»

+Dr. Josef ARQUER
(Berlin, Germany)

Today, we are given to contemplate the father and vineyard owner asking his two sons: «Son, today go and work in my vineyard» (Mt 21:29). One says “yes”, but he does not go. The other one says “no”, but he does go. None of the two sons keeps the word given.

Surely, who says “yes” but remains home is not trying to fool his father. Maybe he is just lazy, not only to work but also to think. His motto: “What do I care for what I said yesterday?”

But the one who initially said “no” certainly cares for what he said yesterday. He regrets his rebuff to his father. A twinge of conscience may give us the nerve to

rectify. He corrects the false word with a precise deed. “Errare, humanum est?”. Yes, but to remedy is even more human, and more in agreement with the inner truth inside us. Nonetheless, this is difficult, for it means to humiliate ourselves, to smash our arrogance and our vanity. At a given time, we may have lived moments like these: to set straight a hasty decision, a rash judgment, an unfair analysis... And, later on, a sigh of relief: —Thanks, O Lord!

«Truly, I say to you: the publicans and the prostitutes are ahead of you on the way to the kingdom of heaven» (Mt 21:31). St. John Crysostom enhances the psychological mastery of our Lord before these “chief priests”: «He does not reproach anything directly to them: ‘Why did you not believe John?’, but He rather prefers to confront them —much more biting, indeed— with the publicans and the prostitutes. And so, with the obvious force of the facts, He reprimands them for the malevolence of a behavior emphasized by human prejudice and conceit».

And, while we are at it, we might perhaps miss the presence of a third son, the one who likes to beat around the bush, and in whose demeanor we could recognize ourselves more easily when, ashamed, we ask to be forgiven. So, with the Lord's permission, we invent him and we hear him answer his father, with a faint voice: ‘Perhaps I will, perhaps I won't ...’. While, someone, even claims having heard him finally adding: ‘The most probable is that, well, perhaps, who knows...’.