

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 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 he 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.”

“The son answered: “‘I will not,’ but afterwards he changed his mind and went””

Fr. Jordi POU i Sabater

(Sant Jordi Desvalls, Girona, Spain)

Today, we contemplate the father who had two sons and went to the first and said to him: “Son, go out and work in the vineyard today”. (Mt 21:28). And he answered: “‘I will not,’ but afterwards he changed his mind and went” (Mt 21:29). Then, he also went to the second with the same command. And he replied: “‘Yes, sir,’ but did not go”. (cf. Mt 21:30). What really matters is not saying “yes”, but “doing it”. As the saying goes “actions speak louder than words”.

On another occasion, Jesus will refer to the doctrine taught by this parable: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven”. (Mt 7:21). As Saint Augustine wrote, “there are two wills. Your will has to be corrected so as to identify it with God's will; but do not try to bend God's will to adapt it to yours.” In the Catalan language we say a child “believes” you to mean he obeys you. There is an identification of obedience and faith, of the relationship that exists between trust

and obedience.

Obedience comes from the Latin composition “ob-audire”: meaning, to listen with great attention. And this should be evident in our prayer, in our not turning “a deaf ear” to the voice of Love. “We men tend to “defend ourselves”, to adhere to our selfishness. But God demands that, when obeying Him, we put our faith to work. At times, our Lord suggests what He wants in a whisper, deep, down, inside our conscience: we must remain on high alert to be able to distinguish his voice and be faithful to it” (Saint Josemaria Escrivà). To abide by God's will implies becoming a saint; to obey does not mean to be a puppet in someone else's hands, but to interiorize what we must accomplish: and then, to do it “because you feel like it”.

Our Mother, the Virgin Mary, a great teacher of obedience to the faith, will show us the way to learn how to obey the will of the Father.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“When there is sin in a man, such a man cannot behold God. But, if you will, you may be healed. But before all let faith and the fear of God have rule in thy heart.” (St. Theophilus of Antioch)

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““Lord, these are my sins, they aren’t this man’s or that woman’s.... They’re mine. You take them’. When we are able to do this, then we will be that beautiful people, the humble and poor people, who trust in the name of the Lord.” (Francis)

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“Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves. Against those among them ‘who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others’ (Lk 18:9), Jesus affirmed: ‘I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance’ (Lk 5:32). He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 588)