

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time/
Year A – 30 September/1 October 2017 -
Recognition/Blessing of Safety Forces (All Masses);
Beginning of “Respect Life” Month; Life Chain (After
11:00 AM Mass, here)
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community – HOMILY

1st Reading:

Ezekiel 18:25-28

- “Thus says the Lord: You say, “The Lords’ 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 . . . But if he turns from wickedness he has committed, and does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; . . . “

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 25 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Philippians 2:1-11

- “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. . . . 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, . . . *ancient hymn . . . used during the Easter Triduum, Good Friday, Celebration of the Lord’s Passion . . .*

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 21:28-32

- *Story about 2 sons . . .* “Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ . . . ‘I will not,’ but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other . . . ‘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 . . . 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.”

i. This Jesus really, **REALLY**, has a way of getting right to the issue . . . **HE IS RELENTLESS** . . .

Last week . . . not only did we hear, from the Prophet Isaiah, that "Gods thoughts and ways are **not** our ways" . . . but Jesus provided a very relatable parable of just what that truth about God looks like . . . turning our sense of fairness upside down and inside out . . . and exposing humanity's pettiness . . . our "smallness": "Are you envious because I am generous? Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last?" . . . God is **never** the one doing the measuring which is affirmed again, this week.

ii. We hear the lament that "The Lords' way is not **fair!**", and once again, human pettiness and smallness raise their heads . . . far from having in us . . . in you . . . in me . . . in others . . . "the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus" as Saint Paul in his letter to the Philippians so wonderfully uses to introduce the ancient hymn that follows these words . . .

"The Lords' way is not **fair!**" . . . Without a doubt, this statement is true, based on our human interpretation of **fair** or **fairness**.

Consider this week's Gospel.

How would you respond . . . not just to the question Jesus poses, "Which of the two did his father's will?" . . . since I think the response of the chief priests and elders of the people is the response each of us would offer Jesus, but if this situation were **real** for you?

In life, there are times when someone does not completely meet our expectations, or, just does not do something the way we wish it would be done . . . a child won't clean up their room or take out the garbage without, first, being asked a half-dozen times . . . a co-worker will complete a job, "but miss some major parts" . . .

In each of these . . . and certainly other situations . . . we have a choice on how we respond to missed expectations or less than hoped for and desired results . . . just as the father in the Gospel parable had a choice, or for that matter, just as God can choose.

We can either affirm what was done . . . "Thank you. I know you didn't want to work in the vineyard

today, [or clean up your room, or take out the garbage, or finish that job] . . . but you did, and I appreciate that . . . **or** . . . we can be critical: "Was that so difficult to do? Why must I always beg . . . plead . . . repeat a simple request?"

iii. Imagine for a moment if God had chosen **not** to continue to claim the Israelites as his chosen people, given their history of complaining and turning away from God, even though, in the end, they came back to God? Imagine for a moment if Jesus, following his resurrection from the dead, had gone to Peter and the others who had denied him and abandoned him at the foot of the cross, appeared before them and said, "You denied me . . . you abandoned me . . . so now . . . now . . . I will send an advocate . . . but to others I choose . . . not to you." Imagine if Jesus had not chosen to use Saint Paul ultimately the way He did and has, given Paul's persecution of His followers?

Imagine if God treated us . . . you . . . me . . . others . . . not based on the good we do at this moment . . . but the **bad** we did yesterday . . . last week . . . last month . . . years ago?

The Lords' way **is** not . . . never **has** been nor ever **will be** about **fairness** . . . at least not how you and I might define it . . . It **is** about being faithful to the relationship God has initiated with us no matter when we decide to respond . . .

Each and every one of us is flawed . . . each and every one of us have made mistakes . . . but these need not control us . . . nor how we view others. As one homilist wrote, "Our past does not determine our future. Our history is not our destiny. A sin can be forgiven. A flaw can be mended. A life can be changed. Through our Baptism, we are part of a community where sinners become saints on a daily basis . . . where those who judge learn to understand . . . where those who think only of themselves become servants of others . . ." and, I would add, where true disciples are formed and made.

"It is never too late." God's grace, compassion, love and mercy never run out . . .