



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal - The Last Moment

Dear Friends in Christ,

On this **26th Sunday in Ordinary Time** the Gospel has a message similar to last Sunday: What counts is one's final state. It's not about how long a person has worked in the vineyard, but whether he's at work when the shift ends. Today Jesus tells about a man who says "yes" to God and later loses his soul by disobedience. A different guy says "no" to God, but later makes an act of obedience.

Some people ask: How can a last minute choice determine where a person spends eternity? It doesn't seem fair, but then God has a counter question: "Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?" (Ez 18:25)

The fact is a person's final choice has a history. During our entire life we are molding ourselves – or, to be more exact, allowing ourselves to be molded - into a particular shape. While this process is going on we might be only dimly aware of what is happening, but at the end it will become clear.

To illustrate consider the novel - *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. It tells about a young man who envies his own portrait because it will never grow old. Well, as the story develops, Dorian retains his youth and beauty even though he embarks on a self-centered and cruel life. After many years he encounters the portrait. While Dorian remained outwardly beautiful, his portrait has changed. Dorian sees the hideous face and realizes that it represents his true inner self. Out of shame and rage he attacks the painting. When people hear the commotion, they come running. They discover the portrait in its full original beauty. Next to the portrait they see the body of an old man, horribly disfigured - repulsive to all.

During this life we are like moist clay: by our choices we can be molded into almost any shape. But death is like putting the clay into the fire. The clay might be a beautiful vase or a misshapen lump. Whatever form it has will last forever. Similarly with our souls: at the moment of death we will either be turned toward God or away from him.

When you think about it, there are really only two moments that matter: the present moment and the final one. In the Hail Mary we say, "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." At the last moment - the hour of our death - our eternal fate will be sealed. The moment of our death is in God's hand, the moment we can control is now. At some point the two moments will coincide: the hour of death will be now. There will be no tomorrow to plan for - or to postpone repentance. Begin now to allow God to mold you as you desire to be for eternity.

What counts is not the image that others perceive. What matters is our final state before God. And you can count on this: God's way is perfectly and mercifully fair.

Have a Blessed Week!

Fr. Rafal Ligenza

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