

## 26th Sunday (A)

In the Gospel this weekend we hear the Parable of the Two Sons. I think that this parable teaches us about mercy and amendment of life.

To recap, a man has two sons. He asks one son to work in the vineyard. He first says he won't go, but later on changes his mind. The other son says he will go work in the vineyard, and later changes his mind and doesn't go.

Jesus uses this parable to teach about fidelity to God, but it all hinges on how these two sons change their minds. One changes their mind to reject doing the father's will. The other changes his mind and does the father's will. This change is what we mean by conversion of heart.

The Greek word used for conversion is *metanoia*, and it literally means "transformation." When we change our minds and hearts to Christ it involves a transformation. We do become more transformed the closer we are to Jesus. We are transformed into our true self, the person we were created to be. Receiving God's mercy leads to this transformation. We are brought back to Christ, as we turn away from sin.

This faithful son, in the parable, was initially disobedient. He told his father that he will not listen to him. Something changed his mind. We don't know what. But he changes his mind and is brought into his father's vineyard and works. Like the parable last week, we have a vineyard. A vineyard symbolized the Church in

the parables. So this faithful son is brought into the Church. He was outside the Church, and now he is brought in. He is reconciled with the Church.

This is mercy. This is what mercy does for us, brings us back to God and His Church.

This is what happens in the Sacrament of Confession. When we sin are disobedient to God, we are unfaithful. The mercy given brings us back to God and the Church. This mercy transforms us. The change of mind of the faithful son is the transformation that accompanies mercy. When we receive God's mercy in Confession we are changed.

This faithful son was converted and transformed through God's mercy. He also changed his ways. This is what is on our end when we receive Jesus' mercy. The grace of mercy and forgiveness in Confession is there, not only to forgive, but also to help us change our ways, to amend our life. When we leave the confessional we should be committed to change our habits and actions, so that we will not commit again the sins that we just confessed. This is called amendment of life and is shown by this faithful son.

This faithful son changes his mind, enters the vineyard, and does his father's work. This is how we can learn about amendment of life. Before he changed his mind he was outside the vineyard doing what he wanted to do. After receiving mercy and being reconciled, he amends his life and does the work of his father.

This is the hard part, the rub when we go to Confession. We are given this gift of Jesus' mercy with the expectation of changing our life so that we won't confess this again. This is what is meant at the end of the Act of Contrition, "I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more, and avoid the near occasion of sin." The grace of the sacrament forgives our sin, and helps to support us in the work of amending our life.

No matter how big or how small the effort is, it is worth doing. Small venial sins probably require little to no effort to avoid. It's the habitual sins, especially habitual grave sin that is very difficult. This is the road of holiness and virtue. This is the road that leads to Heaven. None of us can avoid this. We do this, amend our life, by becoming aware of that one particular sin that we do (predominant fault), see what capital sin it is part of, and then cultivate the opposing virtue of that capital sin. This is how we amend our life and it is worth doing.

There is a spiritual axiom that states that if there is authentic growth in one particular virtue, growth in all of the other virtues comes along with it. A person who actually does this goes to Heaven. A person who conquers a vice, grows in the opposing virtue, and grows in all of the other virtues goes to Heaven. This is why it is worth doing this, why it's necessary to do this.

Let us seek out the mercy of Christ in Confession. May this grace support us making the changes we need to amend our life and grow in that one virtue. May we walk this road that leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven.