

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Action speaks louder than words”

September 27, 2020

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Ezek. 18:25-28; Ps. Phil. 2:1-11 or 2:1-5; Matt. 21:28-32

I think all the lessons from this weekend's readings are about our relationship to God, but John 10:27 (the Alleluia verse) says it best: "I know my sheep; they hear my voice...And they follow me". It is as simple and direct as the parable Jesus tells us today about the two sons. It is about what we do, not what we say that matters - "Action speaks louder than words". Moreover, the Lord knows us by the way we follow him.

But the lessons today do more than just admonish us to act on our faith. They give us some insights into why that is often so difficult even for people of faith. The Old Testament lessons reveal that we often get our relationship with God on the wrong track, making it difficult for us to keep our ears tuned to the shepherd.

Thus Ezekiel reminds us that we are tempted to think about our relationship in a legalistic sense. But God was telling us long before Jesus came to tell us again, *it isn't about how little/big we sin*. The message here is that God will always forgive us if we repent and change our ways. For if someone "turns from wickedness and does what is right and just, he shall surely live; he will not die..." This means that the person (Born Again) has found, and is acting on the word of Jesus Christ, who is infinitely more attractive than even the most powerful allure of evil in this world.

That is why the parable of the two sons lifted the example of the one who changed his mind and decided to do the will of the father as the best example. "He replied, 'I will not', but afterwards changed his mind and went". Hence the 2nd son was not only readily forgiven, but he was the model son. That idea doesn't easily fit with our usually judgmental/logical way of thinking, does it?

It is certainly true that the Lord's ways are not our ways, and so the Good News today is that God is always ready to forgive; we need only show willingness to accept God's forgiveness through our forgiveness of each other. The Resp. Psalm today reminds us that we so often think that God will be pleased with us if we try to live upright lives, but we don't always follow through with that. And even when we do, that leads us to worldly pride, and it makes us judgmental of others. That leads us away from God! Instead we are to acknowledge our own

failures and remain humble in following the Lord's ways. That leads us to be compassionate to others, just as the Lord is compassionate to us.

Since "Action speaks louder than words", we need to lead a responsible Christian life, saying "yes" to God. This means, we should become men and women who profess our Faith in word and deed, remembering that, "Not all those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of my Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Sadly, we often use flimsy excuses to silence our conscience. *They run like this: "I didn't realize how sinful I was"; "That's what all my family does – it's got to be OK!"; "The devil made me do it – it wasn't my fault!"; "I couldn't be different from everyone else—I'd look stupid!"; "I meant to straighten things out – I just didn't get to it."* These are not valid excuses at the judgment seat of God. Rather, we need to "Walk the talk". "Action speaks louder than words"!!

Indeed, God is calling us right now, inviting us to work in His vineyard, inviting us to say "Yes" to Him with our Christian words and actions, by which people will be able to identify us as followers of Christ, and not by empty words or pious gestures. In this way, we shall live a life filled with the joy that doing the will of the Father brings. Yes, they will know we are Christians by our love! It is about what we do, not what we say that matters - "Action speaks louder than words".