

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Year A1

I grew up being a paper boy in a neighborhood just over three or four blocks from the one we lived in Owensboro. It was **work** for a young person, getting up so early and heading out into the weather (like the US mail motto, rain shine, snow or ice, the papers **have** to be delivered), but it was also fun, like the good exercise of bike-riding or walking the route in the morning, but also being outside as the sun came up (and all the other things you see going on as the world wakes up around you!) It was great work and life experience for a young person. And now I'm not tattling - I'm not telling on a brother, but this happened sometimes on weekends. One of my brothers, while we might be watching Friday night movies, he'd say, "Get me up in the morning, I want to deliver papers with you." I'd think, "Hey, great, a little help makes it all go faster, and somebody else to make the time fun!" So, okay! Well then, the next morning comes, the alarm goes off. I walk over and shake his shoulder and he says (again!) "Go on, not this morning, I don't feel good". That is not help. But the funny thing is, that happened more than once. Until we both just stopped that acting. But really, I don't know why it upset me, because the hardest work was not on weekend days. Saturday and Sunday were the least pressure days, because afterward, I went back to bed, not like during the week, when I had to get home and then get ready for school.

But I think of that when I hear this parable of Jesus about two sons. But again, I am not tattling or blaming, because I have more than my share of saying, "Yes, yes to my mom or dad, about doing a chore or task they asked of me, and then I went right off to do something else I wanted to do instead. Maybe mom said, 'Go to store and get some margarine or pickles and don't dilly-dally'. When I got to the store, that would be the time a neighbor kid is breaking all the records on the video game and a crowd is gathering around him watching and rooting for him. So I tell myself, I'll just watch for a second....and a second becomes a minute, and minute becomes a half hour. Now, is that doing the will of my mother? No, it is not. I needed to follow through completing what she asked.

So, Jesus asks the Chief Priests/Elders in the gospel parable today, "Who did the Father's will?" Was it the son who promised the moon, agreeably saying 'Oh, I will, I will' with little intention of actually following through with the work, or someone who outright pouted and said 'NO I won't', but **then** came to their

senses a couple minutes later and without any special recognition, just went ahead and completed the task. Jesus' point is that it is what they did in the end, that matters. Not what they promised, but what they actually delivered. I remember that a couple years ago I was working with a contractor (trying to get a good deal for the church securing some building materials-wholesale). She had an attention-grabbing habit of always affirmatively saying, "**Absolutely, yes**". I really needed all it to happen, 'just so' with the timing because of lignin up volunteers. So, I had asked her up front about being able to come by and pick it up from the warehouse ourselves (she said, 'absolutely'), and I asked, 'Will it be this particular product manufacturer (again, 'absolutely'), and it will be pre-cut and ready to lay ('absolutely'), and can I charge it on account with you, to help me not have to have check in the hand of the driver that morning ('absolutely yes', she said), and then it happened - the closer. I asked, "So, a week, Thursday at nine, I'll send a pickup with a trailer, and she said, "Oh well, **yes** that is, **if** Louisville gets it sent down here to us." My whole point was to make sure it would all be set up, to get the job done. With Jesus' parable, one son got it done and one son didn't. Actions speak louder than words. Interestingly, with both sons, what they said was not what happened. A person can say anything. But **what they do**, is what counts.

We do not always know exactly who Jesus is addressing (talking to) with his teaching. Yet, today's parable and next Sunday's parable about the greedy & violent vineyard tenants, Matthew does tell us that Jesus was addressing the 'Chief priests & Elders' & Pharisees (*Matt 21:23 & Matt 21:45 are clear about it being them, so much so, that Matthew tells us that they feel the pointed sting from Jesus words and start plotting to kill him after these exchanges*).

With this parable story, Jesus is comparing the chief priests and elders to the son who said 'Yes Yes' (*'We know your law, God, and we will do it' but they don't.*) like the bobbing head of a teacher's pet sitting beside the teacher's desk in school, but then they proceed to just go off and do their own thing ignoring the teacher. While the other seemingly disobedient son, who first boldly defied the father, this son properly reconsiders his attitude and actually become the true good son who in fact ends up doing exactly what the father desired. He delivers, and completes faithfully afterward, just what the father had asked.

Two chapters from now in Matthew 23, Jesus will light into the Pharisees, and say of them, that they know what to teach/say, but that they just don't do it.

He counsels His disciples to ‘listen to the Pharisees teaching’ but to stop there, don’t follow any of their actions, because they act nothing like what they say. They say all the right things, but don’t do any of them. Talk a good talk, but that is it (*Matthew 23:3 “Do and observe all the things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach, but they do not practice.”*) They are just like this son who falls over himself, saying yes, yes, but without any intention of actually doing anything. (Yeah yeah yeah)

So, Jesus cautions the Chief priests and elders (and all of us), that in fact tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of them (they who maybe at first are denying God by their sinful actions, they then are turning around-converting and actually fulfilling good works and following God in the end, while the Pharisees and Priests who profess to be following God’s command, are in fact falling away from God’s will, because their deeds/acts tell a different story) Such a parable as this, challenges all of us to be the true child of God, who not only agrees and says with our words that we will follow God, but that we also follow through and deliver, showing by our actions in life, that we do commit to serving Christ (doing what we say). May our work for God always back up our words to Him. May our witness always be true – doing the Will of the Father!