

26th Ordinary Sunday
September 27, 2020
“God’s Way or Our Way?”

Ez 18:25-28
Phil 2:1-11
Mt 21:28-32

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the hardest things that we all must learn is to admit we are wrong about something. Admitting we are wrong is so difficult because it usually means we have to change our behavior. It means that we must begin to think and to do things differently. Changing from who we were and what we did before, requires that we get rid of our pride and replace it, instead, with humility! This change will always affect people around us for the better.

Humility is based upon truth – the truth of who we are, who others are, who God is, and what is good and best in every situation – for our world and for those around us!

Humility also means that we can never have a sense of entitlement. We are not owed anything in the grand scheme of things. However, we do owe so much to others, especially to God Himself!

Many of the Chosen People had that sense of entitlement. Consequently, it was hard for them to admit their sins and waywardness – and it was very hard for them to change.

Today, the prophet Ezekiel tells them that God always reads the heart, no matter what they did in the past. Their past good deeds would not save them if they went astray in the present moment or in the future. However, if they changed their hearts and their ways – if they began always to do what was right and just – they would be saved! God had chosen them and favored them. Yet, this did not mean they could disregard all that God expected of them as individuals and as a nation! God would reward or punish them based upon what was truly in their hearts!

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Jewish leadership found it very difficult to change. They were of the upper class – They had their customs and traditions – But they were also filled with pride and a sense of entitlement.

Consequently, they could not accept Jesus as someone whom God had sent – nor could they accept his words. Even though they had kept all the fine points of the Torah, they were not open to what God was asking of them in the person of Jesus and were unresponsive to everything that Jesus said and did. They were like the vinegrower’s son in the parable, who said “Yes” to his father’s command and then refused and walked away.

However, the prostitutes and the tax collectors – who were often trapped in their situations – who were not living the way God wished them to live – changed! They had said “No” to God for a long time – Yet, when they heard the words of John the Baptist, they repented and changed! They found a new way to live and new meaning for their lives when they embraced the call of God and His will!

Unfortunately, the chief priests and leadership paid no attention to the remarkable change of the prostitutes and tax collectors. Instead, they were self-righteous. In their terrible pride, they believed they could do no wrong!

St. Paul shows us the depth of humility in the Son of God who became one of us in the person of Jesus. This was in marked contrast to the Philippians who were beset with selfishness and vainglory. They were Christians, but they were prideful, nevertheless – and needed to change. They needed to learn from Jesus, himself, by imitating him in everything they did – especially in their interaction with others! Jesus always did the will of the Father. Jesus was always the servant Messiah. He was even willing to die for us, rather than compromise his message from God of love, mercy, and service.

Brothers and Sisters, we inherited our pride and selfishness from our primal parents, thousands of years ago. We must constantly fight the temptation to be gods ourselves – beholden to no one, and with a sense of absolute entitlement. Sadly, far too many in America and in the world today have been seduced by the false prophets of the prince of darkness.

However, change is always possible – especially through prayer, And we must pray that the world and those in it have a change of mind, heart, and behavior. So let us pray, today, that the people of the world open themselves to what God is asking of all of us – May they see the folly and disastrous outcome of their present way of life – And may they, somehow, change and become all that God wants them to be.

Amen.

September 27, 2020

Msgr. Russell G. Terra