

September 27, 2020

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ez 18:25-28

Phil 2:1-11 or 2:1-5

Mt 21:28-32

**GROW:** I've always had a bit of a recalcitrant streak. Ask me to do something, and I'll happily oblige. Order me to do something, and I'll set my jaw. So, I can relate to the first son's knee-jerk reply when told (not asked) to work in the vineyard. "I will not." Yet, despite this initial reaction, the first son obeyed his father's command. He "changed his mind and went." I didn't see it at first, but this parable is not about a clash of wills but obedience – not blind obedience, but choosing to turn over our lives to the will of the Father. The longer version of Paul's Letter to the Philippians illustrates this beautifully, challenging us to imitate Jesus: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." As human beings, we have the freedom to choose to place God's will and the needs of others before our own. It doesn't mean being a doormat, but rather having a healthy humility and willingness to "change our minds (and hearts)" to better conform to the example of Jesus. As the *catechism* reminds us in this gem about obedience: "The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just." (1733)

**GO:** Have you ever kicked a bad habit, such as eating too many sweets, falling down the social media rabbit hole, or failure to floss? I've occasionally pulled it off (well, for a few days anyway), but I find it's much tougher to change habits of my mind and heart. In today's Gospel, the first son *changes* his mind, and his heart. This is what Jesus asks of us as well: a change of heart and mind toward love and obedience, wherever it is needed in our lives. For starters, it could mean taking a few moments to pray for guidance each morning before jumping full-speed ahead into our personal agenda. We can ask God to show us how to align our lives more closely with his will for us – through prayer, reading the Scriptures, and reflecting on areas in our lives that need an overhaul. Our "yes" to working in the vineyard begins by attending to what God has shown us, and leads us to even greater freedom in Christ.

**PRAY:** Need a spiritual jump-start? Pray the Daily Examen, an ancient practice from St. Ignatius Loyola of peacefully reflecting on the events of the day in order to detect the presence of God's Spirit and discern his will for you.