

Read

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Philippians 2:1-11 or 2:1-5

Matthew 21:28-32

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 27, 2020



REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, we hear a very familiar situation. Someone says they won't do something but then does it, and another person says they will do something but then does not do it. Does one describe your life more than the other? We've all had occasions when we didn't do something that we said we would do. Maybe we forgot or maybe we didn't want to do it in the first place. Even when we end up doing something that was requested of us, we might be grumbling the whole time about how we don't want to be doing it, like chores or schoolwork. Do you think this attitude is how Jesus would want us to approach these situations? Probably not. At the end of the Gospel reading today, Jesus calls out the religious leaders for not "walking the walk." They certainly "talk the talk," but when John the Baptist came announcing Christ, they did not live out their beliefs and change their lives. Rather, it was the sinners who lived out their faith by changing their lives. Our actions should reflect our beliefs.



ACTION

This week, take some time to review your attitude. Yes, you might do what you said you would do, but are you doing it with an attitude of Christ? Are you doing things with a spirit of charity and humility? Each night, review your day and think about what your attitude was when you were doing certain tasks. Where can it be improved? When did you do things with the right attitude? Reflect on those good moments and work to apply that attitude to other situations.

***"Without love, deeds,
even the most brilliant,
count as nothing."***

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you (or can you) embrace the activities you do?
- ❖ Do you see them as a cooperation with God's plan for your life?



September 27, 2020

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #136A

Ezekiel 18:25-28

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Philippians 2:1-11 or 2:1-5

Matthew 21:28-32

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus reminds us that our actions often speak louder than our words. He tells the religious leaders of his day a parable of a man and his two sons. One son does what he is asked to do, even though he refused at first. The other son does not do what he is asked, even though he had agreed to do it. Jesus challenges the religious leaders to consider what it means to live out one's beliefs. Many of them did not listen to John the Baptist's message about repentance and following Jesus. However, many others who were considered sinners were heeding John the Baptist's call. Jesus shows that those who "walk the walk" are living their faith authentically.

Q FOCUS: *Our actions and words should reflect our beliefs.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate the memorial of St. Thérèse of Lisieux on October 1. We come to know St. Thérèse from her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*. She joined the Carmelite Order in Lisieux, France when she was fifteen years old. Though she died young, at the age of twenty-four, she spent her time as a Carmelite nun praying for others. She lived what is now called the "little way;" the small, ordinary acts that we complete every day can be filled with love and care for God and for our neighbor. She is also known as "The Little Flower." She is one of the Doctors of the Church.

Church Teaching Connection

"Contact with the visible manifestations of God's love can awaken within us a feeling of joy born of the experience of being loved. But this encounter also engages our will and our intellect. Acknowledgment of the living God is one path towards love, and the 'yes' of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love" (*Deus caritas est*, 17).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 21:28-32

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you

saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Do your parents ask you to do things around the house, and you refuse to do those chores? But then later, you change your mind and go ahead and do what your parents had asked of you earlier? Or, have you promised to do something for your mom or your dad, and then forgotten to do it, or just said you would so that they would stop bugging you? This Gospel passage describes both of those scenarios. In this case, a man had two sons- one who said no to a task and then went ahead and did the work; the other son said that he would work in the vineyard and then did not go.

► **Which of the two did the father's will? Jesus and the chief priests and elders give us an answer, but do you agree with their interpretation of the parable?**

Once again, Jesus is teaching us using a parable. Jesus teaches that both what we say and what we do is important. In the case of the first son, his immediate reaction was to say “no” to his father, when his father asked him to work in the vineyard. The passage states that the first son then “changed his mind,” which is an integral part of the story. The

first son had a knee-jerk reaction at the beginning: “No!” But then he thought more about it; he probably thought about how he could make his father happy by doing what he was asked, how he could help the family's vineyard to produce more fruit, or how he wants to be a dutiful son and help his father. So, he changed his mind and did what he was asked to do.

► **Describe a time when you had a knee-jerk reaction to say “no” to a task or to disagree with someone but then changed your mind. Why did you change your mind?**

Then there is the second son. He said what his father wanted him to say, but he did not do what his father asked him to do. Can you think of a time when you told someone that you would do something, and then you did not do it? You might have had a good excuse for not doing it or you might have just not wanted to do it. The second son was being dishonest to his father. Unfortunately, sometimes we too are dishonest with those people whom we love.

► **Why is it important to be honest with others, especially those who love and care for us?**

Jesus uses this parable to show the chief priests and elders that their actions are like that of the second son. They say that they believe in God (saying “yes” to what God asks), but when faced with the challenge of John the Baptist's preaching on repentance, they did not change their behavior to match their belief. Their actions do not reflect what they say. However, people who were considered sinful in Jesus' time, who made the wrong choices, did believe John the Baptist when he told them about Jesus. The sinners believed that Jesus is God's Son, but those who taught others about God and about their faith did not believe in Jesus.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 34.

Our actions are just as important as our words. Both demonstrate our beliefs.

What are some things that might stop us from doing what we said we would do?

Sinners believed that Jesus is God's Son, but the religious elders did not.

Act on the Word

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Bring in some recent newspapers, magazines, or allow the students use of smartphones and tablets during class.

Divide the teens into small groups of four or five. Distribute various newspapers or magazines to the groups. Allow time for each person to read a short article of their choosing. This does not have to be an in-depth reading, but enough that they have a general idea of the article and the people involved. Use the following questions to guide the discussion within each group about the actions/events they read about.

- ✧ What reason(s) did the people give for doing the actions?
- ✧ What attitude did the writer have about the actions?

- ✧ What were the consequences of the action? Were they positive or negative? Did they impact anyone other than the primary people mentioned in the article?
- ✧ How do the events or actions in the article impact the young people's lives or their community?
- ✧ Are there any insights from today's Gospel passage that they can apply to their discussion of current events?

End the discussion by having groups share their insights with the larger group.

Closing Prayer

*Lord our God,
we have made many promises to you;
how many times have we broken them?
Give us the grace of true repentance, and
the strength to walk in your ways,
doing all that you have asked of us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.