
26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 27 SEPTEMBER 2026 • YEAR A

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Thus says the Lord: ‘You say, “The way of the Lord is not just.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.’

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 25(24):4-5b. 6-7. 8-9. R6a

R. Remember your compassion, O Lord.

O Lord, make me know your ways. Teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth, and teach me; for you are the God of my salvation. R.

Remember your compassion, O Lord, and your merciful love, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. In your merciful love remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord. R.

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he shows the way to sinners. He guides the humble in right judgement; to the humble he teaches his way. R.

R. Remember your compassion, O Lord.

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:1-11

Brothers and Sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy; complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia. My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord, and I know them, and they follow me. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:28-32

At that time: Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." And he answered, "I will not", but afterwards he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, "I go, sir", but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterwards change your minds and believe him.'

REFLECTION

The first son's answer is wrong, but it isn't his final answer. He refuses his father, then changes his mind and goes into the vineyard. The second son speaks beautifully and does nothing. Jesus places the weight not on what each son says in the moment, but on the life which follows. The door of repentance remains open, while religious words without obedience remain empty. St John Chrysostom notices that Jesus invites the chief priests to judge the story before they recognise themselves within it. They know which son did the father's will. Their difficulty is not understanding the truth, but allowing that truth to change them. St Jerome sees in the first son those who began far from God but responded when the call came. Their past refusal doesn't prevent their present obedience. That is good news for anyone who carries regret. God doesn't freeze us at the moment of our worst answer. Grace gives us room to turn, to begin again, and to enter the vineyard even after we have said no. But the parable also unsettles those of us who know how to say the right things. Faith is not proved by our fluency, our respectability, or our ability to sound devout. It takes flesh in the next faithful thing we do. At the Eucharist we confess where our words and lives have parted company, receive again the mercy of Christ who humbled himself for us, and are sent back into the vineyard. The Father is still calling, and our answer can still become yes.

Church Fathers: St John Chrysostom, Homily 67 on Matthew; St Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 3.21.