

LECTIO DIVINA OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - A Cycle

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, I believe that You uphold the creation by the strength of Your mighty power and your great wisdom. In Your Word You have laid out all that we need to live godly lives. I desire to do Your will God and I pray that I may serve You in the manner that You require. Help me to live each day of my life in holiness and righteousness, in humility of heart and in self-control. Help me to walk in spirit and in truth and to do only those things that I have heard from You, through the Word of God and the gentle promptings of Your Holy Spirit in my inner soul. May I look to You and not to the ways of the world and may I apply myself diligently to pursue You greater plans and purpose in my life, willingly accepting correction, eager to forgive others and enjoying sweet fellowship with You day by day. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen

(brief silence)

Reading: A reading from the book of Prophet Ezekiel 18: 25-28

Thus says the LORD: You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!" Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Reader: The word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.

Commentary: A typical childish response to punishment is to say, "That is not fair!". In

reality, God is fair but we have broken rules. It is not God who must live up to our ideas of fairness; instead, we must live to His standards. God is a God of Love, but He is also a God of perfect justice. His perfect love causes him to be merciful to those who recognize their sin and turn back to him but he cannot wink at those who willfully sin.

Responsorial Psalm (PS 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9)

Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. (R. Remember your mercies, O Lord)

Remember that Your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from of old. The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not; in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord. (R. Remember your mercies, O Lord)

Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way. (R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.)

Second Reading: A Reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 2:1-11

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to

be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those 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.

Reader: The word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.

Commentary: St. Paul emphasizes Christ's obedience to God's will by emptying himself, taking human form and humbling himself by accepting death on a cross and because of all his obedience, God the Father exalted Christ, bestowed on him the Name above every other name, and made Jesus the recipient of universal adoration. As believer, we are called to have a christlike attitude, setting aside our rights in order to serve others. If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as he lived. We should develop his attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts. Are we selfishly clinging to our rights or are we willing to serve?

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 21:28-32

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 our Lord Jesus Christ/
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Meditation: The parable in today's Gospel speaks of a man with two sons. Both the sons are told to go out to work in the vineyard. The first son says that he won't go, but later changes his mind, goes and works. The second son says that he will go but does not go. In each case, there is a decisive choice to go and not to go. Jesus teaches through this short parable that repentant tax-collectors and prostitutes, represented by the first son who initially refused to go, will make their way into the Kingdom of God before the chief priests and the elders because of their repentance and obedience. Whereas the arrogant and proud scribes and Pharisees will not make their way into the kingdom of God because of their refusal to obey God's call to repentance. They will be excluding themselves while the tax collectors and prostitutes who were despised by these religious groups will be accepted into God's kingdom. Our inclusion and exclusion of God's kingdom is based purely on our Yes to God's will.

But how do we know God's will? It is important to know God's will for our life. Jesus said that His true relations are those who know and do the Father's will: "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). Jesus rebukes the chief priests and elders for failing to do the will of the Father; specifically, they "did not repent and believe" in John the Baptist and Jesus Himself (Matthew 21:32). Those who receive Jesus Christ by faith, they become God's children (John 1:12) and they are led by God in His way (Psalm 143:10).

God's will is Knowable and Provable. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." As God's children, when we say 'no' to the world and allow ourselves to be transformed by the Spirit, we will know God's perfect will. Knowing God's will is sometimes difficult because it requires patience. It is quite natural that we want to know all of God's will at once, but that is not how He usually works. He reveals to us step by step, one at a time. Each move is a step of faith and we have to wait for further direction in our busy world. God reveals His will for us in the Holy Mass, Personal Prayer, prayerful reading of the Sacred Scripture and listening to the Holy Spirit and Seeking the wise counsel of the holy people.

Jesus is our model in knowing and doing God's will. How? His entire life and ministry were orchestrated by His Father. He was careful to carry out every detail according to the will of His Father. "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do thy will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:7). All that Jesus said and did was exactly what His Father wanted Him to do and say. "For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent me and has given me commandment, what to say, and what to speak" (John 12:49). Christ's Complete Obedience climaxed in His Death. Accepting cross is an act of perfect obedience and he said, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not My will, but your will be done" (Luke 22:42). While teaching his disciples on how to pray, he clearly said, your kingdom come and 'your will be done'.

Each one of us is responsible to God for every one of our actions. Therefore, there should be coherence, consistency, connection and integrity between our Faith and Action, our

words and deeds. As he invited two sons to work in His vineyard, he is calling every day each of us to work in His vineyard and for that we need to say "yes" with sincere commitment. Let us conclude our reflection with a poem written by an unknown author on "The Will of God".

The will of God will never take you

Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you

Where the spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you

Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The will of God will never take you

Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.

Concluding Prayer: Lord Jesus, Thank you for this evening and the time to be with our spiritual family. May the things that you have revealed in our Bible study and the thoughts that we have shared in the Lectio Divina dwell in our hearts and stir us to action in the days to come. Help us to share your love with everyone that we encounter this week. Lord, we know that everything happens for a purpose. We may not see the wisdom of it all now but we trust and believe in you that everything is for the best (Hail Mary/ Blessing)