

Ordinary Time 26A 2014

Saying and Doing

In the gospel we have just heard, Jesus tells a parable that illustrates how people respond to God's grace. On the one hand, there are those who immediately and enthusiastically say "yes." *Yes*, they will follow in the way of discipleship. *Yes*, they will make the necessary sacrifice. *Yes*, they will do God's will. But once they begin the Christian life, their enthusiasm wanes. And although they said yes, they do not do God's will. On the other hand, there are those who refuse the initial offer of salvation. Hardened and embittered for whatever reason, they respond "I will not serve," "I will not accept this grace." But then something happens. They undergo a profound change of mind and heart. They begin to understand the gracious gift God is offering to them, and slowly they respond to God's grace.

Jesus experienced such reactions to his own ministry. There were those who said they would follow him wherever he went; but they did not. And there were those who initially rejected his message; but they changed their minds. This is why Jesus tells the religious leaders of his day that sinners and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before them. For, despite their immoral lives they repented, whereas the religious leaders did not.

This parable reminds us that it is not a matter of what we say but what we do that counts. We may have the best of intentions; we may promise to do God's will;

but if we do not act on those promises and intentions we are like the son who said “yes,” but did not do what his father asked. We are like people who confess their faith but do not live their faith.

The life of discipleship is a life of grace and action. Everything begins with God’s grace. God graciously redeems us. God graciously makes us his sons and daughters. God graciously gives us the gift of the Spirit, and we share in God’ own life. And so there is nothing we have done that earns our salvation. But what we do matters. How we act is important. How we respond to God’s grace makes all of the difference.

Because we have received the gift of God’s grace, we ought to live in a way that corresponds to God’s grace. Because we have received the gift of God’s Spirit, we ought to live in a way that corresponds to God’s Spirit. Because we destined for salvation, we ought to live in a way that reflects the gift of salvation we have received.

In a few moments we will receive the gift of God’s grace in the Eucharist. As we receive this gift, we ask for the grace to live in a way that corresponds to the gift we have received. We ask for the grace to do what we say; we ask for the grace to live the faith we profess.