

## “IN ADVANCE”? NOT WITH GOD!

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This Sunday Gospel in another one that speaks to us about who God is and how we can enter into his Kingdom.

The first reading is a first step that God does to “*make straight*” human way of thinking, wanting to reform our mentality. There was a time when people thought that if someone sinned, God was extending the punishment for that sin to several generations; there was no such a thing as individual responsibility. Through the words of a Prophet Ezekiel God says “*No! I never make people responsible for what they haven’t done by themselves*”. It’s true that in our lives we may suffer in some way the consequences of what our parents or grandparents have done, but it’s not because of God’s punishment, it’s because of the harm they personally caused to us. More, God says that he is not making a person responsible for what he/she has done before, if later there was a process of conversion and change in their lives.

Jesus takes up this thought and puts it in a context of relationship between father and sons. A father offers to his sons an opportunity to be with him, to work in his vineyard, to participate in all the goodness he can give. Jesus points out that God is much interested in knowing if in our relationship with him we are truly his children. It could seem that the important thing in this parable is who went to work and who did not. But there is something more to that. We notice that one of the sons answered “Yes, sir”. He didn’t call him father. The other son didn’t even call him “sir”; it seems he is just not in mood for any relation, he says “I don’t want”, even though later he makes some realization.

What is the point of father’s invitation? Jesus is trying to show to us that our Father is not interested in us fulfilling our obligations. It doesn’t matter if we feel that being Catholics, Christians, believer we ought to do what is commanded to us. God wants us to be his children and to express this relationship in a very concrete action of being with the Father, working with the Father.

This parable shows that God is present in this concrete moment, in this concrete situation where we find ourselves, telling us “*you are my son, you are my daughter, do you want to work with me or not?*” God is not interested in

what we declare, where do we belong, what we have done in past. He is interested in “*NOW and HERE*” and if we chose to be with Him. God without looking into past nor future, continually goes out to meet his children and ask if we want to be with Him. Even if in this moment someone might say “no”, he will wait for us to change our mind. He is not satisfied with a FORMAL BELONGINGNESS, coming from tradition or feeling of obligation. He is waiting to confirm in every single moment that we still want to be with Him.

This guides us to a simple truth about God: He is not keeping our past in a wardrobe (both good or bad), he doesn’t look at us by what we have done, neither good nor bad. He is always available for us in a concrete moment we find ourselves in. What concrete lessons we can draw from this way of God’s relating with us?

For God, every moment is a moment to be with Him. We can never say “*I have lost, there is too much evil in my life, I am limited by my decisions*”. No, God is always available for us in a present moment of our life. It is in this moment that you can turn your back or decide to be with Him. God wants our NOW, not our past nor our future. It’s TODAY that He want to be with us. We are not tied by what we have lost in our life, because in any moment there is a chance to go back to Him. It is never too late.

We also, being with others, cannot look at them through what he/she did in the past. It doesn’t mean that we have to believe in their good intentions: words mean nothing. In our decision to give someone another chance, we need to see concrete steps, actions that will indicate the new beginning. We need to look if NOW they are taking concrete steps to change, any effort. It is true that we use to judge others only by what they did in the past. And many time we thing the same about ourselves: I am a Catholic, since ever I am in the Church, I have my bad moments, but I am sure that God will take into account that I am religious, I prayed so much, I was serving the Church for so many years. But this parable will tell us that what matters for God is THIS MOMENT. Where am I in this moment? With God? Ready for conversion NOW? There is no such thing as “*in advance*” with God. We cannot gain merits “*in advance*”.

*God sees only TODAY. And it is TODAY that you want to be with Him or you don't. We cannot say that "it's enough with what I have already done".*

It means that TODAY we need to ask a question: "*What TODAY can be done to work in God's vineyard?*" We need to ask where God is calling us today, to what conversion, to what good things, to which path. Don't postpone it thinking if today I am with God, I can wait with my response. It is a day to change your mind if for some time you were not doing what He was inviting you to do. Even though there is so much that you have lost, even though your burden feels heavy, TODAY is the day when you can come to work in Father's vineyard. As CMT, we have THIS DAY to respond to the needs of the Church.

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