

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Oftentimes, changes in our thoughts and attitudes are preceded by taking action. We might find it difficult to think our way into right action, but when we take action, our mindset and perspective begin to change. Like last week, this week's Gospel Reading is set in a vineyard. Jesus shares a parable of two brothers asked to tend to their father's vineyard:

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?"

Father Jim Harbaugh, a recovering alcoholic and Jesuit priest, reflects upon this Gospel reading. "The first son in this story sounds like an alcoholic; in fact, I think he sounds like me," Harbaugh writes. "When the father orders him to go to the vineyard, this son says, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.' He blows up and stomps off, and broods a while, and then eventually (probably after he has decided it's really his idea to go), he goes. The other brother, much like the Elder Brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son, is a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Eddie Haskell type, so of course he says yes right away. Unlike the "alcoholic brother," he doesn't tie himself into knots of guilt and defiance brooding over the father's command. Why should he? He's the respectable son. And since he doesn't think twice about his father's command, it slips his mind."

Good intentions are nice, but our actions and behaviors ultimately form our attitude. In recovery, we are asked to take on an attitude that seeks the well-being of others and trusts God's divine plan. Extending a helping hand to another is an action, not an intention.

Ultimately, God's incredible patience must not be overlooked. His generosity toward us leads the way for us to be generous, merciful, and loving to others. There may be times when we need an attitude adjustment, and we can look to Christ as our ideal per the direction of this week's Second Reading:

*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.*

Working through the twelve steps helps create this attitude within us by leading with action. Taking the time to actively pursue the spiritual work of the twelve steps is an undertaking that often happens before a shift in our attitude and thoughts.

Jesus was most like God in his willingness to share fellowship with the most ornery of humanity—even with those who tell God off and later come back to Him sheepishly. Let us adopt the same willingness to pursue God's will and maintain a grateful attitude.

- What actions do you take on a regular basis to maintain a faithful attitude and healthy thoughts?
- Can you think of a time when taking action helped transform your thoughts and guide your attitude for good?
- What is it like for you to change your mind after a moment of self-reflection or upon being presented new information?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18:25-28

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

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32