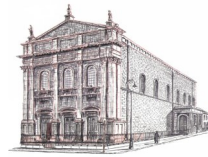




PARISH OF ST. AGATHA
26TH/27TH SEPTEMBER 2020



Fr. Brendan Kealy Adm.: 087 9117575 Office:
 Tel:018554078, Mr John Kelly: Chairperson Parish Pastoral Council
E-mail : office@stagathasparish.ie **Website:** www.stagathasparish.ie

Jesus I Trust in You

POPE: A TRUE CHRISTIAN CHOOSES GOOD OVER EVIL EVERYDAY

Pope Francis urges us to open ourselves to God's will and to put love for our brothers and sisters into action. He reminded believers that Christian life is not made up of dreams or beautiful aspirations, but of concrete actions, the capacity to open ourselves to God's will and to love our brothers and sisters. He took his cue from the Gospel reading (Mt 21: 28-32) that recounts the parable of two sons who are invited by their father to go and work in the vineyard. The first son impulsively responds "no", but then he repents and goes. Instead, the second son, immediately replies "yes", but does not do so. "Obedience does not consist of saying "yes" or "no", but of acting, of cultivating the vineyard, of bringing about the Kingdom of God," he said.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT AN EXTERNAL FACADE

This parable, the Pope explained, teaches us that the Lord asks us to go beyond a religion that is made up of external and habitual practice which does not affect people's lives and attitudes.

He went on say that the exponents of this "façade" of religiosity, of which Jesus disapproves, are "the chief priests and the elders of the people", who, according to the Lord's admonition, will be preceded in the Kingdom of God by "tax collectors and prostitutes."

This does not mean, he continued, that Jesus indicates publicans - sinners - and prostitutes as models of life, but as "privileged of Grace", which "God offers to anyone who opens up and converts to Him." "Indeed, these people, listening to his preaching, repented and changed their lives," he said.

GOD IS PATIENT

The Pope assured the faithful that while God asks us to convert, He is patient with us: "He does not tire, He does not desist after our "no"; He leaves us free even to distance ourselves from Him and to make mistakes. But He anxiously awaits our "yes", so as to welcome us anew in His fatherly arms and to fill us with His boundless mercy." Faith in God, he continued, asks us "to renew every day the choice of good over evil, the choice of the truth rather than lies, the choice of love for our neighbour over selfishness."

Quoting from Luke he said those who convert to this choice, will be the first to find place in the Kingdom of heaven, "where there is greater joy for a single sinner who converts than for ninety-nine righteous people."

THE GRACE OF CONVERSION

The Pope also pointed out that conversion is a painful process "of purification from moral encrustations." It is a path, he added, in which there is renunciation and sacrifice. Today's Gospel passage, he said, calls into question the way of living a Christian life that must consist of concrete actions and commitments and love for the other. Pope Francis concluded invoking the Most Holy Mary to help us to be docile [obedient] to the actions of the Holy Spirit "who melts the hardness of hearts and disposes them to repentance so we may obtain the life and salvation promised by Jesus." (Vatican News).

REMOVING THE MASK OF HYPOCRISY

In today's Gospel (Matt 21:28-32), Jesus encourages us to think about the consequences of our choices, especially the choices and decisions that will count, not just for now, but for eternity as well. The choices we make now will affect and shape our future here on earth, as well as in the life to come. Jesus makes His point that good intentions are not enough and that promises don't count unless they are performed. We all remember the saying that *the road to hell is laid with good intentions* that were never acted upon. God wants to change our hearts, so that we will show by our kind speech and by our loving and merciful actions, that we respect His Divine Will and actually do it. No pretence but sincerity.

FIRST SON REPENTED AND CHANGED HIS MIND

The father in the parable represents God and the Vineyard is the Church today. The two sons represent those who either do the Will of God or reject it. The father provided his sons with a home and offered them good work in his own vineyard. He expected them to show him gratitude, loyalty, and honour for all he did for them. The rebellious first son, told his father to his face, that he would not work for him. But afterwards he changed his mind and did what his father asked him to do. While initially he was disobedient, he thankfully changed his mind. This is all about the soul who repents and ponders on their faith and eventually, through divine Grace, satisfy God's Will and Commands. Their conversion leads their hearts to possess the Sacraments of Love, Mercy and Peace, which is the Church.

SECOND SON FOOLING HIMSELF ONLY

The second son who pretended to be good and obedient said he would work for his father, but had no intention of doing so. He did his own thing contrary to his father's will. The second son represents the person who is simply two-faced. While publicly claiming to be a Catholic, even religiously going to Mass, they secretly reject the teachings of Jesus. They do not genuinely practice their faith towards God or their neighbour. The second son reveals himself as a hypocrite, who outwardly claimed to be obedient, but inwardly had no intention of doing the will of the father. He represents people who portray themselves with all the trappings of spirituality, but sadly have no substance. They might be fooling themselves, but not God. They forget that their unchristian actions, whether done privately or publicly, are observed by God. For example, many Catholics acted hypocritical when secretly they voted in agreement with Government referendums, that clearly contradicted the divine Will and Teachings of God. on abortion and same sex marriage. Many Catholics smile to their neighbour's face but behind their backs ridicule them.

GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S BOUNTIFUL LOVE AND MERCY

The whole point of today's Gospel is to show Jesus as the long-awaited merciful and patient Messiah. In the First Reading (Ez 18: 25-28), God tells us what happens to our soul after death if we stubbornly live in sin and not renounce it. He says that *when the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die.* It is never too late to change our mind and ask Jesus for His Divine Mercy. To turnaround and tend to the missionary role we are all called to fulfil in the Vineyard of the Church. Many hardened sinners, described by Jesus as prostitutes and tax collectors, repented for their sinful way of living, and changed their minds before God took them. They are now in Heaven. Those who are long standing Catholics, but who lack true spiritual substance and integrity, by not living their Faith honestly, will be passed-over by the sinner, who truly repented by living their Faith. St. Paul tells us today (Phil 2:1-11), that we must not be *conceited* (full of one self) but to be *self-effacing* (humble) and to *be united with each other in Love, with a common purpose and a common mind.* That is the Mind of Christ. God bless, Fr. Brendan.