

October 1, 2017

Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Psalms 25

Philippians 2:1-11

Matthew 21:28-32

Growing up on a farm, I spent a lot of time with my father, whom I loved and respected greatly. The times we spent together were special. Some of those times were great fun – playing ball, hunting, and fishing. Some, not so much – working in the fields, tending the livestock, and repairing equipment. Whether we were working or playing, I learned a lot from my father, and I learned early on about doing my father's will. He knew how to get things done, and he wanted them done his way. You probably have heard the saying, "there are three ways of doing things – the right way, the wrong way, and my way." Well with my father, there were only two ways. His way and the right way were one and the same. Anything else was the wrong way. So, when he taught me to throw a baseball, dig a post hole, hook a minnow, drive a tractor, or whatever, I paid attention and did my best to follow his instructions. Now, I will admit to a little rebellion from time to time when I would tell him I had a better idea. And depending on his mood, he would either let me try my way and possibly fail, or he would tell me flat out that my idea would not work and to do it the way he taught me. Sometimes I would get a little devious – letting him think I was doing something his way when I actually did it my way. My way worked occasionally, and I sometimes got away with it. But more often, it did not work, and the only I proved was that his way was indeed better. And, I got myself in trouble to boot. But, even when I got away with surreptitiously doing something my way rather than his, I felt guilty about doing it behind his back.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches the chief priests and elders about doing his father's will. He uses a parable about a man with two sons whom the father asks to go out and work in the vineyard. The first son replied, "I will not," but he later changed his mind and went. The second son replied, "Yes, sir," but he did not go. Jesus' question for the chief priests and elders was simple, "Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered immediately, "The first." Jesus' question caught them off guard, and their quick response was self-incriminating, for like the second son, they too were guilty of saying the right things but not doing the right things. They had said "yes" to God, but they did not follow through with their actions. These same religious leaders had criticized Jesus for befriending tax collectors and prostitutes, people they considered to be sinners. But Jesus tells them that the tax collectors and prostitutes, who had once said "no" to God, would enter the kingdom of God before them because, unlike the religious leaders, they turned away from sin and reformed their lives. It is not clear if the chief priests and elders ever got it, but the point Jesus was making was that our words and our actions must agree.

Doing the will of His Father was a dominant theme throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus. All four of the Gospels present repeated accounts of Jesus calling not for his own will to be done, but for the will of his Father to be done. We find it in the prayer he taught, "Thy will be done." And in his Agony in the Garden, Jesus begged the Father to let this cup pass him by, but then he added, "not my will but yours be done." In our second reading today, Saint Paul describes Jesus' submission to his Father's will in very beautiful and poetic terms. "Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped." "Rather, he emptied himself...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

If we are to truly follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, as we are all called to do by our

baptisms, then we, too, must do the will of God. It is not enough for us to piously and reverently profess our faith unless we also put our words into action. In the seventh chapter of Matthew, Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. So, what are we to do? How are we to know the will of God? Will someone tell us, or are we on our own to figure it out for ourselves? Well, neither. Each of us has the capacity to discern the will of God, but we must work at it and we need help. Just as Jesus emptied and humbled himself, we must first empty ourselves of our egos, self-interests, and pride. And then, we must open ourselves humbly to God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says we each have in our heart, “a law inscribed by God,” calling us to, “love and to do what is good and to avoid evil.” We hear that call through our conscience. Our sacred obligation is to form our conscience properly through prayer, the teachings of Holy Scripture, and the traditions and teachings of the Church, and then follow our conscience. When we follow our well-formed conscience, we are doing the will of God. In the words of the prophet Micah, we will act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God.