

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

October 1, 2017

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Mt 21:28-32

Option 1

“When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did.”

A preacher gave his congregation a simple rule to live a good and happy life. He said, “Turn right and go straight.” Implicit in that simple truth is the need for each person to make a free will decision to choose to do right rather than wrong, to do good rather than evil. Jesus tells a parable that calls us to discern God’s will and make a free will decision to choose to do God’s will even if it is inconvenient, unpleasant or risky. The father told one son to go work in the vineyard, he said “No!” but had a change of heart and went. The second son said “Yes sir!” but did not go. Jesus teaches us that our first response to God’s will for us may be “No!”, but our final response to God must be “Yes.” Doing God’s will may not be easy, it can be challenging. For many Catholics and Christians around the world today it involves losing all worldly possessions and is a matter of life and death. But to be true disciples of Jesus we have no choice but to “Turn right and go straight.” and say “Yes!” to God.

Option 2

“Which of the two did his father's will?”

This is a parable that every parent should be able to cite and recite at a moment’s notice - frequently. It captures the true meaning of the difference between honesty and dishonesty, good and evil, right and wrong. There are very few of us who have agreed or promised to do something and then failed to do so. Sometimes we forget. Sometimes we get overwhelmed by other events or emergencies and cannot make the time to do what we promised. But sometimes we commit to do something and have no intention to fulfill that commitment. And then there are the occasions when we refuse to do something, then reconsider and do what we have been asked. Jesus knew that when we truly open ourselves to God in prayer we may hear Him ask us to do something we are not willing to do. But when we are being good stewards of our prayer and continue to be open to God’s will for us, we will do God’s will regardless of the challenge of consequences. It is then that we are honest, good and righteous.

October 8, 2017
Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mt 21:33-43

Option 1

**“He will put those wretched men to a wretched death
and lease his vineyard to other tenants
who will give him the produce at the proper times.”**

After telling a parable about tenants of a vineyard who killed the servants and the son that the landowner he sent to collect his fair share of the crop, Jesus asks what the landowner should do to the tenants. Before we approve of the disciples response, we should consider: Does the vineyard represent the world? Do the tenants represent us, who have been given a share in God’s world to be productive for the Lord? Do the servants represent the patriarchs and prophets that God repeatedly sent to the Israelites to remind them to love God and their neighbor? Does the owner’s son represent Jesus who came to teach us how to love God and our neighbor; to love our enemies; to love one another as He loved us? Are we being productive with what God gave to each of us? Are we returning to God His fair share by sharing with others? Now, do we still want to “put those wretched men to a wretched death?”

Option 2

**“The kingdom of God will be taken away from you
and given to a people that will produce its fruit.”**

A wise employer who paid above average wages and provided very good benefits would tell all of his new hires, and remind his existing employees, “If you do your job you get to keep it.” He treated his employees like family and they learned they could come to him with problems and concerns, and he would help if he was able. “Say what you mean and do what you say” was another of his many expressions. He expected his employees to do their job and be honest with him, with each other and with the customers, and to treat each other as family. This wise employer knew that Jesus was teaching the chief priest and elders of his day, and us today, that God our Father and the Creator of His Kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven” has given each of us a vast array of talents, abilities and gifts that He expects us to use for our own benefit and to share with others. If we fail or refuse to do so He will take his Kingdom from us and give it to “people that will produce its fruits.”

October 15, 2017
Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel Mt 22:1-14

Option 1

“Jesus again spoke to the chief priest and elders of the people in parables . . .”

Jesus told many parables. They were stories, not necessarily based on fact, but that communicated an important truth. Jesus used parables to get the attention of the people and to make them think. Jesus even used parables to teach truth to the “chief priest and elders of the people.” And apparently, they listened to him. He tells them about a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The servants that were sent to the “invited guest” are mistreated and killed.

The king fills the feast with people ordinarily thought unworthy. God invites us to a great feast - the wonderful world he has created for us. Unfortunately we can create our own small world filled with our own self-centered interest and ignore the opportunity to share with others in God’s world and the joy of growing in our relationship with God. The chief priest understood that Jesus was challenging them to be better. Do we understand he is challenging us as well?

Option 2

“Then the king said to his servants,

‘The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come.

Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.’”

The Gospel passage for today and the past several Sundays have been parables that Jesus used to create images to teach his disciples and challenge the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes. Jesus used parables because of all of them, including Jesus himself, the scribes were, by definition, the ones who could read and write. Some parables, such as today’s Gospel, had rather harsh sounding messages. Many parables were about the consequences we face if we do not understand and acknowledge God as the source of all that we have and fail to be all that God created us to be. The parable in today’s Gospel is addressed to the *leaders* and *elders* of Jesus’ day. They may or may not have been able to read and write, but they were intelligent enough to understand that Jesus was challenging them to be responsible *leaders* and *elders*. Do we understand Jesus is challenging us to be all that God created us to be?

October 22, 2017

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mt 22:15-21

Option 1

“Whose image is this and whose inscription?” They replied, “Caesar's”.

The image or name of emperors and kings was often embossed on the coins minted during their reign, both out of vanity (some even proclaimed themselves gods) and as a demonstration of dominance. During the life of Jesus the coins of the Roman Empire bore the image of Caesar. People living under Roman rule, either by choice or conquest, depended on Caesar for protection and commerce. Jesus recognizes the trap the Pharisees laid for him. They understood his response: To the extent that you depend on Caesar as the source of your life and existence, then “repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.” But, if you recognize and accept that you are made in the image and likeness of God; and acknowledge God as the source of all that you are, all that you have, and all that you ever will be, then “repay to God what belongs to God.” Who is our God? Whom do we recognize as the source of all that we are? How do we repay to Him?

Option 2

“Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

Parents and care givers who send a child off to college or to a different city to live on their own may observe that their child gradually becomes aware of who fed, clean, clothed and housed them in their infant years; who sacrificed so much time, personal interest and resources to provide them with an education and opportunities to grow and mature. It may not be until that child has a child of their own that they fully appreciate all their parents or care givers did for

them and how much they owe them, and possibly express gratitude. Are we aware of God’s gifts to us and try to use them to the best of our ability for ourselves and others? Do we understand our obligation to thank God for his generosity? If we never become aware of God’s gifts to us, and fail to use them, we may have to depend on Caesar [the state]. Then we may understand the wisdom of Jesus, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” It may be helpful to remember that without God there would be no Caesar [the state].

October 29, 2017
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mt 22:34-40

Option 1

“The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

Pope Benedict XVI tells the great story of the man who went to Rabbi Shammai and asked if he could recite all of the law and the prophets of Israel while standing on one foot. Rabbi Shammai said it was impossible. So the man went to Rabbi Hillel and asked him the same question. Rabbi Hillel lifted one foot and said, “What you do not want others to do to you, do not do to them.” Then he put his foot down. Jesus reflects Hillel in the Golden Rule [Matthew 7:12] and reminds his questioners and us of *Deuteronomy 6:5* and *Leviticus 19:18*. Both Hillel and Jesus knew that their questioners were looking for a way out, a way around the law, a loophole. But there is none. In fact, Jesus ups the ante. He commands us to love our enemies. And just before he goes out to be brutally tortured and crucified, he says, “Love one another as I have loved you.” When we see Jesus face to face, what will we have to say to Him about how well we have done?

Option 2

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

During the life of Jesus Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel [the uncle of Gamiliel, who taught Paul] lead two schools to study the Torah in Jerusalem. A man approached Shammai and asked if he could recite all of the laws and the prophets of Israel while standing on one foot. He said it could not be done. The man then went to Hillel, who raised one foot and said “What you would not want someone do to you, do not do to them” and then put his foot down. He added, “**All the rest is commentary.**” The Pharisees and Sadducees sent a scholar of the law to challenge Jesus with the same question. Jesus, cites Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and adds that “The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandment.” Jesus is saying, “**All the rest is commentary.**” Imagine a world in which everyone loves God with their whole mind, heart, soul and strength; and loves their neighbor as themselves. Obviously, we cannot do it by ourselves. But if we do not do it ourselves, it cannot happen. So let it begin with us.