

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Renewing Our Yes to God

Ezekiel 18:25-28; Psalm 25:4-5,6-7,8-9; Philipians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Opening Prayer of the Mass, also known as the Collect, helps set our hearts as we reflect on this weekend's readings.

"O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen"

We ask God to pour out his abundant mercy on all of us, his children. We do not deserve this pardon and mercy, yet God gives them freely. When we open our hearts, follow his commands, and humbly surrender to him, the treasures of heaven, such as Christ-like character, love, joy, and deeper faith, begin to grow within us as we move toward our eternal destiny. This growth happens when we participate with love and action.

Have you ever told God, "Lord, I will change and pray more," or promised, "Lord, I will stop this bad habit, stop getting angry, and learn to be patient and forgive"? These are deep promises about living as God's children. We often start with good intentions, but sometimes we end up back where we began. Thankfully, God is always patient with us.

The three readings share a message: the story of how we say "yes" or "no" to God.

In the first reading, Ezekiel reminds us that anyone can change direction. Even someone who has done wrong can turn away from sin, choose what is right, and begin a new life. This means that even if we have failed to follow God's commandments, we can still say "yes" to living a good life.

This is what Jesus shows us in the Gospel. He tells the story of a father who asks his two sons to work in his vineyard. The first son says, "I will not," but later changes his mind and goes. The second son says, "Yes, sir," which sounds obedient, yet he never goes. So which son did what his father wanted? It was the one who changed his "no" to a "yes," not just in what he said but in what he did.

In his letter to the Philipians, Saint Paul goes further. He shows us that saying "yes" to God means adopting the same attitude as Jesus. We are called to think, act, and love with the humble, selfless spirit Jesus embodied. Jesus did not merely say "yes" to the Father—he lived it. He emptied himself, humbled himself, and was obedient, even to the point of dying on a cross.

The three readings fit together well, showing that saying YES to God shapes how we live our faith and that it matters only when our actions match our words. Ezekiel calls us to change direction. The Gospel reminds us to let our actions reflect that change. Saint Paul encourages us to make Jesus our model.

Our Christian faith is a journey of ongoing conversion. It means choosing what is right and holy and living it out each day. Every day brings small and big decisions that shape who we are. When pride keeps us from saying sorry, we can choose humility. When anger tempts us to take revenge, we can choose forgiveness. When money tempts us to be dishonest, we can choose what is right and holy. When our own interests tempt us to go against our conscience, we can choose God.

Sometimes choosing God is hard. We all face moments when we must decide which path to take: the easy way or the way of conscience, selfishness or service, dishonesty or integrity, or resentment or forgiveness. The path to God always leads to life with him, even if it is not easy.

Jesus showed us this in his life. His journey led him to the Cross, and the Cross led to resurrection and new life. Whenever we face a crossroads, we can ask ourselves, "Will this choice bring me closer to God or farther from him?"

Our patron, St. Therese, chose Jesus. She was happy to be known as St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Her life inspires us to try each day to live as children of God. We pray that we may always strive to live as God's children. Like St. Therese, being a child of God can mean:

- Choosing a life of charity in gratitude for the blessings received;
- Humbly recognizing God's forgiveness and reaching out to forgive others;
- Inspiring others to love and serve God;
- Lovingly leading others to the Church where Christ is proclaimed;
- Devoting oneself to prayer for those who are ill or in need and for those who have lost their way.

Let's remember the opening prayer for this Sunday.

We ask God to pour out his abundant mercy on all of us, his children, the mercy we don't deserve but is freely given when we beg for it and begin walking in the way of Jesus, not the way of the world. The treasures of heaven, or even better, the treasures of Jesus, the source of strength and the compass of the saints, will guide us on our journey toward our eternal destiny. The Holy Eucharist is central to all the treasures of heaven. It is a treasure our Lord Jesus commanded us to observe in his memory.

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