

You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:

Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?

What an interesting question God places before us today! It's likely one we don't consider often enough. Realistically, if you examine your interior life, how frequently would you say you consider how your "ways" affect God? How often do we consider how fair we are in dealing with God? What does it even mean to be "fair" to God? Well, as you all know by now, I'm a slave to my Thomistic formation, so - in order to better understand this topic - we must make an appeal to the Angelic Doctor for greater insight. St. Thomas equates the concept of fairness in the *Summa* to that of Justice. He defines justice as a virtue or a habit whereby a person **renders to each one his due**. More colloquially, we may say that being Just, or exhibiting the virtue of Justice means we give to everyone what they deserve. This is something we understand from a very early age in regards to our interpersonal

relationships. As children, we show our parents love, obedience, and admiration - their minimum due for all they sacrifice for us. We give our teachers, our superiors at work, and those who bear civil authority respect, and a certain degree of deference, as is their due in a polite society. We give our spouses sincere affection, implicit trust, the benefit of our aid, and much more, all as a “total gift of self”, to use Pope St. John Paul’s language in the Theology of the Body, as what is properly due to the covenantal relationship of matrimony. We engage in all of these behaviors and many like them as works of justice done to our fellow man...to those we feel obligated to out of filial love. If we understand this arrangement and its utility, how much more so then ought we to feel obliged to give to God what is His due?

This is a particularly biting question, as it causes us to really confront the reality of our belief in God, and the depth of our relationship with Him. Last week, our worthy Deacon asked us all the question “Do you believe in God?”...that was a very timely inquiry, as it forms the basis for our interior examination today. If we do believe in

Him, then we understand our position relative to Him...that He is the Creator, and we are the created. With this hierarchy firmly established, we then have to admit that what we owe God...in justice, what we must render to Him as his due...is quite literally *everything*! There is nothing we possess that we have any right to withhold from Him. Our material goods, our intellectual capabilities, our talents, our time, our love and admiration, the entirety of our lives - everything belongs first to Him. Most of us would profess belief in this without hesitation...we might even say it with the best of intentions...but do we actually live as though we believe it? This is the reality God is alluding to when He questions His people through the prophet Ezekiel. *“Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?”* God is rebuking His people both for questioning His ways, *and* for their errant behavior which contradicted what they professed. They clung to sin and vice, and thus were condemned for their disobedience - God rendered to them what was their due - He acted in perfect Justice. They, on the other hand, would pray and preach loudly and openly in the temple, make extravagant shows of

their sacrifice for their neighbors to witness, condemn the evil of the nations all around them, and all the while continue quietly sinning and rejecting the will of God in their own lives. They would tell God what they thought He wanted to hear...that they would be good and faithful children to Him...then turn around and go about their lives with no regard for the promise they made...for the debt they owed to their creator.

It's easy to see how this dovetails perfectly with our Gospel. Jesus tells the parable of the two sons. One tells his father that he will take care of the work set out for him, and fails to follow through. The other begins by denying his father, but eventually does as his father commanded him to. We know who the just son is...the one who actually rendered unto his father what was his due. We're meant to see ourselves in both sons. All of us, as sinners, have played these parts at one time or another in our lives. The question we must ask ourselves today is this - what part am I playing now? Am I actually doing the work in my life to give to God what I owe Him? I owe Him my love: am I living like this

is true, by spending time with Him in prayer, that I might deepen my relationship with Him? I owe Him my fidelity: am I doing everything I can to remain faithful to Him...to stand up for Him in the public arena...to live my faith boldly everywhere I go, no matter the cost? I owe Him thanksgiving: do I frequently offer God my thanks for everything in my life - both good things and bad - as they are all given to me that I may become the saint He wants me to be? I owe Him obedience: do I seek His will in all things first, and strive to carry out His will to the best of my ability, or do I criticize, complain about, or chronically object to what He wants for me or His Church? I owe Him my tithe: He gives us 100% of what we have, and asks only for a tenth of it back...do we give it to Him faithfully, joyfully, without reservation, or do we hold back out of fear or greed?

What do we have to lose in giving any of these things to God? How easily and quickly do we forget the reality of our existence when we leave this building...that one day, our life in this world will come to an end, and we'll find ourselves face-to-face with our Creator, who will

demand an account from us. On that day, the only thing we'll be able to take with us to present to Him, are the things we managed to let go of in this life...our possessions, our ego, our own inferior will.

Let's make the commitment today - before it's too late - to make a sacrifice of all these things to God, once and for all, that we may render unto Him what is His due. Let's stop trying to critique God in His ways, and concern ourselves more with our own ways. Let's embrace the concept of Justice as He intended it to be lived out - a virtue that aligns our will with His, and nets for us the unmatched grace of His infinite mercy. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!