

Roman Missal, 3rd edition

Homily Notes 4



24th/25th September - 26th Sunday of the Year

Lectionary	Liturgy Notes
<p>Ezek 18:25-28 <i>When the sinner renounces sin, he shall certainly live.</i></p> <p>Ps 24:4-9 r.6 <i>Remember your mercy, Lord.</i></p> <p>Phil 2:1-11 <i>In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus.</i></p> <p>Matt 21:28-32 <i>He thought better of it and went. Tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be used with the handout 'The word of the Lord'.

We are surrounded by advertisements encouraging us to subscribe to this or that 'phone company to obtain better rates and cheaper calls. They often catch our attention by giving us the idea of speaking easily to those we love who are far away. To have a conversation with someone special in our lives can lift our hearts and bring us great satisfaction. Hearing a voice that is dear to us can bring a sense of a loved one's closeness even if we are separated by great distances. In any conversation there needs to be someone who listens as well as one who is speaking. It's good to talk and it's good to listen.

When God speaks to us in the reading it is good to listen then. But he is not far away at this moment. In fact he is very close. As the reader opens his or her mouth it is Christ who speaks. We believe that he is present in our midst as the scriptures are proclaimed.

This makes the role of the reader such an important one and a great privilege. It is vital that it is done well; to do otherwise would be trying to silence Christ. In their ministry readers are used as instruments by God who wishes to speak in the hearts of all who are present. They minister to both priest and people who should hang on to every word they say.

Every time we come to Mass there is a conversation between God and us. Through the scriptures the Lord speaks to us and waits for our reply. We are given words to say or sing to help us respond but these can only ring true if we have paid attention. Sometimes, we must admit, at the end of Mass we can't remember what the readings were about – so were we really listening?

It takes concentration to pay attention, to try and hear what God is saying to us. In the new translation the reader says at the end of the passage 'The word of the Lord' – not 'This is the word of the Lord' as we have had until recently. It is a line said by the reader as an invitation to respond not just telling us a fact. We acclaim 'Thanks be to God' as a



sign that we have listened and will try to act on his message. Can there be times when we make our positive response but then do nothing about it?

The second son mentioned in today's Gospel blithely says 'Certainly, sir'. It seems clear that either he was not listening or he didn't really care. We should weigh carefully our response. To say 'Thanks be to God' without any real meaning can make us just like him.

Would we refuse to respond to the readings unless we agreed with them? Surely not! The first son's response is not a good one but he thinks better of it and goes out to do his father's will. We are reminded that sometimes we need time to think hard about what we have heard. This might mean changing our mind or adopting a different attitude. It takes great humility to really listen and accept the word of God. It needs a generous heart and an open mind.

During today's Mass we took up the response 'Remember your mercy, Lord' a line from Psalm 24. We have been reminded by the passage in Ezekiel and in the parable of Jesus how we can go back on our word and become unwilling to do God's will. In this response the Church puts on our lips another part of the conversation between us and God. Here we speak to him aware of our weaknesses. So often the lines of the psalm express our needs and our confidence in God. By trying to make the words of the psalm our own the conversation becomes more alive to us.

For a conversation to be truly alive it means that something happens to us. In some way we are different after it. We say the word of God is alive and active. Listening to God's word and speaking it is more than just the sound of voices in a conversation. These are words of great power that can heal, strengthen and challenge.