

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

Ezekiel 18:25-28; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32

Excerpts from Pope Francis – Angelus -01 October 2023

by Father Charles Fillion

27 September 2026

Brothers and sisters, I'm sure you are familiar with today's Gospel. How many times did your parents asked you to do something and you responded "yes", right away, but did not do it? I would never say "no" to what was asked, I would just keep silent wondering if I should do what was asked. Usually, I did go and do what was asked. In my case, it was always my two brothers that did everything because my dad did not think I would be able to do it. But if my dad did ask, which he did at times for something I was able to do. Sweep the floor of the hog barn. Yes, I agree that going to work to do what was asked requires sacrifice, and making sacrifices is demanding. But the problem here is not so much linked to a resistance to going to work in the vineyard, in a barn, as much as it is to *sincerity*, or lack thereof, with the father and with our selves.

In the Gospel, even though neither of the sons behaves impeccably; one lies, while the other one makes a mistake but remains sincere. Let us look at the son who says "yes" but then does not go. He does not want to do the father's will, but neither does he want to get into a discussion or talk about it. Therefore, he hides behind a "yes", behind a false compliance that conceals his laziness, and he saves face for the time being. We can say that he is a hypocrite. He gets by without conflict, but he cheats and disappoints his father, disrespecting him in a way that is worse than if he had responded with a blunt "no". The problem with those who behave this way is that they are not only *sinners*, but also *corrupt*, because they lie without difficulty to cover up and disguise their disobedience, rejecting any honest dialogue or feedback.

The other son, instead, who said "no" but then went, is sincere. However, he is not perfect, but sincere. Certainly, it would have been nice to hear him say "yes" right away. That did not happen, but at least he shows his reluctance honestly and, in a certain sense, courageously. That is, he takes responsibility for his behaviour and acts out in the open. Then, with this basic honesty, he ends up questioning himself until he understands he has made a mistake and retraces his steps. We could say he is a *sinner*, but he is not *corrupt*. There is always hope of redemption for a sinner.

For the corrupt on the other hand, it is much more difficult. In fact, the corrupt person's false "yesses", elegant but hypocritical façades and typical false pretences, are like a thick "rubber wall", behind which to take cover from qualms of conscience. And these hypocrites do so much evil!

Brothers and sisters, sinners yes — we all are — corrupt no! It is always good to look at ourselves and, in the light of all this, ask ourselves some questions.

When faced with the difficulty of living an honest and generous life, of dedicating myself to the Father's will, am I willing to say "yes" each day, even if it is demanding?

And when I fail, am I sincere before God about my difficulties, my failings, my weaknesses?

And when I say "no", do I turn around after?

When I make a mistake, am I willing to repent and retrace my steps?

Or do I pretend everything is okay and go through life wearing a mask, concerning myself only with appearing good and righteous?

Finally, am I a sinner, like everyone, or is there something corrupt in me?

May this Eucharist help us be sincere Christians.