

# ***HOC ENIM SENTITE IN VOBIS QUOD ET IN CHRISTO IESU***

*A Homily for the Twenty-sixth Sunday of the Year (A).*

*Texts: Ezek. 18: 25-28; Ps. 24; Phil. 2: 1-11; Matt. 21: 28-32.*

***“Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.”*** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, these words from the Second Reading summarise the message that the Lord has for us today. The ancient Christian hymn in praise of the perfect humility, the perfect love and the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus, made popular by St Paul, effectively teaches all of us the need for perfect obedience to the will of God.

As the First Reading indicates, even from the ancient times, sin has always to do with disobedience to the will of the Lord. Repentance is always a return to the way of the Lord – to doing the will of the Lord. To live is to be obedient to the will of the Lord. But who can be so faithful as to live in perfect obedience to the will of the Lord? The prophets pointed, in expectation, to Someone in the future. The Lord Jesus, true God from true God, fulfilled the expectation expressed by the prophets, when in unequalled humility *“emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave ...he was humbler yet even to accepting death, death on a cross”*.

***“Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.”*** In the Gospel of today, the Lord Jesus addresses the religious leaders of the time about what true religion is. True religion is perfect obedience to the will of God. Verbal profession of faith or mere outward show of religiosity mean nothing of these are not expressions of true commitment to the way of the Lord. Among of the people of that time two sets of people that were most despised as the worst of sinners were the tax collectors and the prostitutes. The tax collectors actively cooperated with the Roman colonial authorities and were engaged in corrupt practises. The prostitutes offered their bodies as commodities in exchange for money. Each of these ways of life was abhorrent. What then does the Lord mean by saying that these people would enter the Kingdom before the religious people? Here is what he meant: the religious people are like the second son in the parable who verbally and spontaneously accepted to work in his father’s vineyard but did not match his promise with action. By their dressing and their outward show, the religious people can easily be seen as doing the will of God. But by their action they do not live in obedience to the will of God. But the public sinners, by their dishonourable way of life have professed their disobedience to the will of God. But if they repent – if they acknowledge their poverty – their powerlessness in keeping the law of God, then they are like the first son, who, at first said “no” but later had a change of heart and obeyed the will of God.

***“Let that mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.”*** We are all known as religious people. But true religion is not the same as merely wearing religious garments or using religious slogans. True religion is ***“living the same kind of life that Christ lived”*** (1John 2:6). What kind of life did Christ live? He was obedient to the will of the Father to the point of accepting to die on the cross. So, what should we do if we have now discovered that we are not really living like Christ? Right here in this Church and right now, we are invited by the Lord to have a change of mind – we are called to repent – to abandon our self-will and hypocrisy and to ask the Lord to fill us with his own Spirit. Let us remember that no matter the seriousness of the sins we live in or the negative publicity those sins have given us, even if we are known by everyone as grave sinners, like prostitutes and publicans in the Gospel reading, we must not be discouraged. We may have said “no” to the Lord many times and in many serious ways, but in his great mercy the Lord invites us today to have a true change of heart – to allow the Spirit of Christ to come into us – so that the same mind that was in Christ Jesus can also be in us. On the other hand, it is possible that we have used our religious profession merely as a ceremonial dress while we have lived in serious sins. The Lord invites us to break with a life of

hypocrisy and embrace a life of authenticity – to have that same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

As we continue to study the life of our great patron, St Paul, let us remind ourselves, that he was indeed a great religious man who wrongly thought that he was doing the will of God by persecuting the followers of Christ. When he encountered the Risen Lord in the course of his mission against Christ, his life changed completely. Here is what we read in his letter to Timothy, “***Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost.*** (1 Tim. 1: 15). In him, we see how the power of God’s grace can change a great sinner into a great saint. And the rest of life can be summarised by the theme of last Sunday’s homily: “***For me, to live is Christ***”. Let us all imitate him.

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