

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Philippians 2:1-11

Matthew 21: 28-32

HOMILY

Up until around 1900, there was a tendency in the church to choose bishops in from the ranks of the ‘aristocracy.’

Of course, there was a good economic reason for this.

- Bishops had to be self-supporting because the people were too poor to pay them.
- It means that the first requirement in a bishop was that he be from the “ranks of the nobility.”

Which meant that the great mass of the ‘lower clergy’, ‘parish priests’ and ‘curates,’ were excluded from bishoprics

The trappings of aristocracy can still be traced in the church today, eg:

- titles like “Your Lordship” when addressing the bishop,
- Or in reference to bishop’s residence as “palaces”
- Or in the practice of kissing the bishop’s ring rather than shaking hands, all these are traces of aristocracy.

JESUS DISMISSES EXCLUSIVENESS

Exclusiveness is actually imbedded in human nature and it’s resurgence in the sanctuary is not a surprise.

Jesus in the Gospel attacks the dominance of exclusivity and superiority, attacking elders and chief priests: ***“Prostitutes and tax-collectors are making their way into the kingdom of God before you.”***

This was a rather shocking message to the scribes and the chief priests. They clearly felt superior and they actually excluded certain people from God’s favour.

- Pagans were excluded from God’s favour
- Samaritans were definitely excluded
- Prostitutes and tax collectors were far removed from God’s favour

Jews were at home with their exclusivity.

Jesus was in fact indignant when he challenged the chief priests and elders in this manner.

OTHER TRACES OF EXCLUSIVENESS

- Not only Jewish elders were guilty of exclusiveness
- We see it in the reformation with the exclusiveness in Calvin’s elect,
- Not only that but what about the Catholic famous mantra ***“outside the church there is no salvation?”***

Could this also not be guilty of exclusiveness in a certain sense?

Religious people in general – if they do not check themselves can be guilty of exclusivism.

THINKING BETTER OF IT

The Gospel story today encourages us to constantly embrace the nobility of a ‘humble change of mind’ like the first son who “thought the better of it.”

- Today we need to be in the habit of opening to change,
- We need to be in the habit of opening to better thoughts.
- The ability to be in the habit of changing our mind is essential for all healthy relationships.

In the second reading, from Philippians, Paul talks of a more specific and positive change of mind: ***“in your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus”***

Failing which, “Tax collectors and prostitutes will go into the kingdom before us.