Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, October 1, 2017 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** A
First Reading: Ezekiel 18:25–28
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25:4–9 | **Response:** Psalm 25:6a
Second Reading: Philippians 2:1–11 or 2
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27
Gospel Reading: Matthew 21:28–32
Preached at: the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein **in the** Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa**.**

Today's readings talk to us of conversion, the importance of what we do rather than what we say, and of the primacy of individual responsibility over communal responsibility.

In our first reading today we hear how "when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life". This describes the salvation that awaits a repentant sinner, one who abandons their old ways and adopts the new life that St Paul says we find in Christ.

The prophet Ezekiel focuses in particular on the phenomenon – a phenomenon I'm sure we can recognize if we are honest with ourselves – of good people who turn bad and of sinners who undergo a conversion. In both cases, the final situation of the person will be the basis for judgment. If we were to read the next few verses from this prophet we would see that he closes with the words "Turn and live." We are thus invited to repent, convert and return to the Lord. Each of us has to – every day – turn towards the Lord in whom we will find life.

Ezekiel's prophecy was significant because to this point the Jewish people believed that the sins of one generation would be visited upon their children – there was a proverb in Israel that went something like "The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." but the Prophet Ezekiel is saying "No!" We cannot blame our parents, or our ancestors, or anyone else for our behavior – God gave us free will and we are responsible and it is what we do that matters more than what we say.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2017-10oct-01-ya-ot-26/

In our second reading of St Paul's letter to the Philippians, he reminds us that we are not to live our faith as isolated individuals but as members of the body of Christ. St Paul says that in order to be part of that Body, we must have the mind, the attitude, the ways of thinking and feeling, that were in Christ.

To have the mind of Christ is, on one level, to imitate him. Discipleship implies following Jesus, seeking in his way of living and acting a pattern for our own life. The phrase "in Christ," however, suggests something more. Through our common faith and baptism, we share in Christ's life; he lives in us and we live in him. To have the mind of Christ, in this sense, is to allow oneself to be moulded by Christ's Spirit from within. And this involves opening our lives, our hearts and minds, to the Spirit and to the Sacraments.

In the eucharist Jesus is present precisely in his act of self-giving love. In celebrating and sharing in it we are invited and enabled in an ever-deepening fashion to put on his mind, to become like him. As we reflect on his example, we are inspired by his Spirit to put it into practice.

And that I think is the whole point – for God, it is not enough to just say some words – we have to backup our words with actions. Jesus followed the Father's will, even unto death so that he could rise again. He has sent the Holy Spirit to us so that we can share in that new life. In a few moments we are going to say the Creed together – the profession of our faith. These are very fine words – but if when we say we believe in the forgiveness of sins – but still hold grudges against people and stay angry, then can we be believed that we are Christians? We must put our money where our mouth is, as they say, and commit. St Ignatius used to say that love is found more in deeds than in words.

We must also take hope that no matter our past, we can always make a new beginning and like the workers we heard about last week who started at the 11th hour and received the same denarius we can also convert – no matter how late in the day.

Let's remember that the event of a conversion, even if a late one like that of the thief on the cross, is so significant for God that – to use an accounting metaphor – he silently sweeps away all the twistedness and corruption from before and opens an entirely new lifetime account for the one who has turned toward him. In the end, at the judgment, the data of such a life is not simply added up and to-

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2017-10oct-01-ya-ot-26/

talled, rather, one entire column is simply erased and a new one begun immediately following. That is how the tax collectors and prostitutes are able to enter the Kingdom of heaven ahead of the Pharisees.

So our lessons from the Gospel today are two-fold. The first is: a late conversion is better than the self-righteous delusion that one needs no conversion. Jesus has come to call and to heal the sick; as Pope Francis says, the Eucharist is medicine for the sick not a reward for the perfect. The second lesson is about the importance of deeds. Do we just say we are Christians? Or do we live our lives as Christians? I know sometimes it is hard to do everything a Christian is called to do – but that's why we belong to a community. Jesus knew that we could not do this alone. That we needed support and help. At the end of Mass today we will hear from representatives from the Parish Finance Committee who will explain how the valuable donations you make each week have helped our community at Holy Trinity help the poor and continue the mission Christ gave his Church to evangelise and spread the Good News. I'd encourage you listen and ask questions of them after Mass. We cannot be Church by ourselves – we need each other and your contributions are a vital participation and sign of your commitment to not just saying you are a Christian, but concretely enabling the living out of our Christian life together. But as Church, we have a duty to tell you how we spend the treasures you entrust with, so please take an interest in what they will say and feel free to ask them any questions you might have afterwards.

Let us also ask for the Holy Spirit's help today to put our words into action. To not say 'Lord, Lord', but to truly take on Christ's heart and mind so that we can be Christ to others, and through our common actions together, put into practice the charity, love and mercy Jesus wants us to bring to the world.

Amen.

Source: https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2017-10oct-01-ya-ot-26/

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
WhatsApp

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Telegram

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Signal

Scan for Website on
Clearnet

Scan for Onion Mirror
via TOR

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2017-10oct-01-ya-ot-26/