Homily for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2026 Year A

That Gospel story about the two sons reinforces for us that saying that 'actions speak louder than words.' It is not so much what we say in the end, but what we do in the end that counts.

As human beings with freedom of will and freedom of choice we are very flexible in our choices, we can say Yes or No to God.

One way or another we are responsible for our conduct and accountable for our behaviour, especially when we stand in judgement before God. We can repent and change the direction of our lives for the good and for the better.

Look again at the responses of the two sons. Like it or not there is a mixture of both personalities in our make up, and the Gospel is telling us that there must be a real connection between what we say and what we do. We may utter a Yes to God, but then do our subsequent actions express that Yes?

We may come to Mass and worship God on Sundays, a sort of Yes, but if, in the rest of the week, our life is not accompanied by upright Christian living, then what we profess to believe and be has no value and amounts to no more than lip service or idle promises, which are worthless.

We are uttering the words but not changing our hearts. There must be a connection between what we say and what we do.

Jesus severely criticised the religious leaders of his day for this sort of disconnect. Their promises were empty because they did not keep them and as a result their journey to God was going nowhere.

Their observance of the Law was merely an outward show and in a ringing denunciation Christ said that there was more honesty and a greater readiness to hear and accept the call to change of life to be found amongst the moral outcasts.

Tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the Kingdom before you.

It is a story that applies to us all because we can look at the trail of broken promises that each of us leaves behind, highlighting the inconsistency between what we promise and what we do.

We can be saying a very sincere and devout Yes to God on a Sunday and then turn our back on what we profess during the rest of the week.

Many of us who say Yes to the Body of Christ do not realise that we are saying No to the community of Christ when, as we go out of the church door, some age-old quarrel prevents us from speaking to our neighbour.

Elsewhere in the Gospels Christ says let your Yes mean Yes and your No mean No. Our Yes must be expressed in our actions, and our actions will always speak louder than our words.