

Upon first hearing it, our Parable today, seems to be comparing lip service and real service. And it is, but at its deeper levels, especially when looked at in the context of the other readings, it speaks of fidelity, commitment, forgiveness and love.

Every one of us is called to new commitments almost daily. It may be a job assignment, a friend in need, a promise to do something for someone.

Our presence here at Mass today, hopefully communicates a Yes that we are making; not just to praying and participating in our liturgy, but to the commitment that our prayer and liturgy signify for our daily lives.

For example, saying "Amen" as we receive the Eucharist, is a commitment, or even a recommitment to being a disciple of Jesus and following his life of service and sacrifice for others.

Is our Yes here at Eucharist a promise to take his life out to the world in which we live? Or, will our Yes in ritual turn out to be a No in life?

That is a challenging question, and we need to be honest with ourselves when answering it.

For instance, consider the Gospel, did the first son eventually accomplish the task his father asked of him? Did the second son? Today's parable is unusual because we don't know. And the answer doesn't really matter.

What Jesus is addressing isn't the measurable achievement of one son or the lack of achievement of the other, but rather a willingness to respond to an invitation to love and to serve.

The tools to do that, as well as the motivation can be found in our second reading.

Paul's letter to the Philippians gives us a model of another Son who said "Yes, I will go." He did go and he completed the task that God, His Father gave him.

Jesus was so willing to serve God the Father that he did not cling to any status he could have claimed for himself. He not only became flesh, but his

willingness to say Yes, was followed by the actions that His Yes demanded of Him.

Can we say that about our Yeses and even the times we say no?

Paul uses Jesus as the model for us who give our **Yes** to God and to each other, in spite of our failures, through our victories, week after week ... at this Eucharist.

We need to approach our failures with honesty and without ego. Our first reading reminds us that our God is the God of, not only a second chance, but of thousands of chances to get right with Him and those around us. His faithfulness, His fidelity to **us** is uncompromising. Because the Son said Yes, we have forgiveness and renewed life.

What about our successes? We should, and this one is hard, we should approach our successes in humility, recognizing where the success came from while still acknowledging our fruitful participation in it.

(PAUSE)

Paul tells us how one can do this: He pleads with the Philippians, and by extension, with us to **“complete his joy”**.

“By being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing”.

Does this mean that we all have to think the same way?

Well, not about everything. Certainly there are preferences and much room for individuality. The world would be an unbearable place if everything were beige, blended so that there is no color in opinions, tastes, etc....but ... **ultimately**...thinking about the things that truly matter... yes.

But here's the thing....To put on Christ, that is, to have the mind of Christ, is not to walk lock-step with each other or even the Church.

It is not to mindlessly obey.

In fact, our mind, that is, our will, must be fully engaged.

To have the mind of Christ is to love like Christ loves. And that is a matter of our free will.

How would this Christ-like love for another person look??

St. Paul tells us that: **We would do nothing out of selfishness. We would regard others, in true humility, knowing them to be more important than ourselves. We put them first in our concerns.**

That is the mind and heart of Jesus.

Jesus places you and me at a higher priority than Himself, even His divinity.

What does Paul say?

“Though He was in the form of God.... he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,..... he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death”.

He did this to redeem, for the sake of love, all of us. But He also did it for you, and you, and you and you.

He loves YOU as if you were the only object of His love.

That love deserves our response, a YES that is truly a YES.

Here is the challenge of the Scriptures today:

To honestly evaluate our responses to God and to one another ...

To commit or recommit ourselves to the Love of Him who is Love, and to allow **His** healing fidelity made concrete in His forgiveness, to shape us and form us in that same love and fidelity.

This is the Christian life. I am not exaggerating here, this Christian life is **meant** to transform the world.

To borrow a sentiment from the ecologist and the economist: we should think globally, but act locally.

Let us then consider our commitment to one another, to our spouse, to our parents, our children, our friends. In this consideration, is there a hierarchy of love? Probably so.

I certainly love my wife differently than I do my friends, or, even my children.

But do I love her as Jesus loves her?

I am ashamed to say, no. I am still sometimes selfish. I do occasionally put my needs, my work, even my ministry ahead of her. But I'm closer in my Christ-like love for her than I am in my love for anyone else.

This is where I must start to ... love ... as ... Christ ... loves..... with this one person.

It may take a lifetime... but I must start here.

If each of us can love just one person, just one, as Jesus loves them, we **will have** the mind of Christ.

And in having the mind of Christ we cannot fail to love everyone as if they were the only object of our love. Imagine what an impact that would have.