

## **Actions – Not Words**

September 27, 2020, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 21.28-32  
Fr. John

One of the forms of the penitential rite at the beginning of the Mass is the ‘I confess...’ or Confiteor prayer in which we profess our sinfulness in what we have done and in what we have failed to do.

In examining our consciences however, we often place more emphasis on the former than the latter - that is those things we have **failed** to do. In other words, all of those missed opportunities that we would have had to witness to Christ and the Gospel. We used to refer to them as ‘sins of omission’. It reminds me of a story of a catechism teacher asking her class if they could explain what ‘sins of omission’ were. One kid put up his hand and replied: ‘Those are sins we forgot to commit’!

Jesus’ parable in today’s gospel about the two sons was aimed at the Pharisees whose words were compliant with God’s Law but whose actions or **inactions** proved otherwise.

The non-compliant son represented those whose outward lifestyles were totally antithetical to a religious way of life [ie. corrupt tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, street people etc.].

However, these days that son may also be those who have difficulty in identifying with Church or any institutionalized religion that doesn’t live up to the creed that it professes. We, who are part of the institution may find these people [many of whom may be our own children] troublesome and disrespectful. But what really lies at the bottom of their motives is a search for truth and authenticity. So rather than dismissing them, we need to listen to their objections as an added impetus to really live and put into action the faith that we profess.

While we can instruct people in words - we **make Disciples** by what we do! Hypocrisy is the bane of all religion. Saying one thing but practising something quite the opposite. Jesus said: ‘It is not anyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven’ but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven’.

I don’t think many of us set out to be people who are chronic hypocrites. In our human weakness, we don’t always follow through on what we say we believe in. However, we need to be truthful enough to honestly admit it. Hence, really **meaning** the words of the penitential rite at the Mass - [ie ‘the things I have done and the things I have failed to do’].

Authenticity and like holiness does not imply perfection but it does imply that we strive for it. Each day provides us with opportunities both big and small for carrying out acts of compassion and kindness. All of these done simply in gratitude and thanksgiving for what Christ has first done for us.

Sometime I go for long periods of time with out getting proper exercise. I know that it's good for my general health but I come up with all kinds of excuses why I can't do it today. However, when I do get back to it and feel better for it both physically and mentally, I wonder why I have neglected it for so long.

The same could be applied to our spiritual health. Carrying out works of love and creating holy moments [as Matthew Kelly would say] puts meat on the bones of our professed faith. It is then that we realize how, when we empty ourselves of self-preoccupation as Christ totally emptied himself of his very life, that we are then filled with life - life in abundance as our Heavenly Father desires for all of us.