

NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [A]

Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32; Romans 3:21-25, 28; Matthew 7:21-27

Last week, Jesus told us “not to worry” and “don’t be anxious” – remember?

How am I not to worry by what we just heard in today’s Gospel?

How am I not to be anxious when Jesus says that there are more than a few who are in line for a shocking rejection?

In today’s reading from Matthew’s Gospel – a continuation of what popularly is called Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” - Jesus boldly proclaims – are you ready for this? – (brace yourself) that pious words and phrases are not enough.

According to Our Lord, **prayer** *must be accompanied by a sincere effort to do God’s will.*

But Father, wait! I pray a rosary every day, *even though I am as impatient and as judgmental as they come.*

But Father, wait! I never miss Sunday Mass, *even though I have never contributed a real moment of my time or the smallest amount of treasure towards advancing mission of the Church.*

For prayer to be genuine, real and effective *it must be accompanied by a sincere effort to do God’s will.*

How, then, do we do **God’s will**?

Doing **God’s will** is much more than pious talk about godly things: *there must be consistency between what a person says and what a person does.*

[note: consistency – *not* perfection]

In high school, basketball was my absolute favorite sport the moment asthma severely interrupted my wildly underwhelming football career.

I wanted to play and play well.

But you know what?

- Desire alone wasn’t enough to make it happen.
- Telling my parents and friends about it wasn’t enough to make it happen.
- Saying the “right words” to the coach wasn’t enough to make it happen.

Are you getting my point?

I accepted the coach's challenge to take 25,000 shots in 12 weeks. That's roughly 300 shots a day, every day for 3 months. Yea, that's what I did that summer.

To this day, I don't even know if teammates did or not – it never mattered to me, because *I* accepted the challenge, *I* took the shots, *I* took coach's words to heart.

Consistency – not perfection – consistency between what a person says AND what a person does.

Hard work? Of course!

- If it were *easy*, the church would be full every Sunday.
(Aside: let's be honest – it's not a lessening of sinfulness outside these church walls preventing more people from joining us sinners inside)
- If it were *easy*, vital parish ministries providing powerful assistance to the poor, lonely, elderly, sick, grieving, and at risk would have waiting lists.

It's darn hard work trying to live daily life in such a way that *consistency* is seen between who we say we are *and* what we do.

According to Jesus, those planning on entering into **God's Kingdom** – getting into heaven - by means of speaking politely or doing pious acts *will be left out*.

Who are the ones about whom the Lord will says in today's Gospel, "I never knew you; depart from me you evildoers"?

In this passage Jesus is not talking about serial murderers, terrorists, extortionists, embezzlers and the like. If he only were, it *would* be easy!

Friends, Jesus is talking about those who only want to look like His followers.

In kindergarten, I think we called it "dress up." We *pretended* we were cowboys, athletes, astronauts.

To be a good Christian, a mature Christian, an authentic Christian,
God must find you faithful to Him and His Church.

Or using language from today's Gospel:
Jesus must know you.

How do we come to know Jesus?

- Live *today* in the heart of His Church.
- Make choices *today* that seek please Him.

