



## 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)



### Matthew 21: 28 – 32

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. The Father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I am going, sir”; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

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### Reflection:

Jesus speaks about two different types of people: those who had said “No” to God, who were guilty of doing some awful things, and those who had said “Yes” to God, but didn’t follow through. The ones who said “No” decided to change their minds and began to follow Jesus. The ones who said “Yes” continued to fool themselves, condemned the others for what they had done and didn’t even change their ways when they realized the first ones were right.



### Table Discussion (at mealtime):

Have you ever noticed that when you say “No”, it separates you from the other person? Maybe that is why the first son decided to change his mind. Though he may not have wanted to do what he was asked to do, he felt bad about the distance he had created with his father. So often it is far easier to say, “Yes”, even if we have no plans to do it. We can always fool ourselves by saying that we will get to it later.

Which of the two sons do you relate to most? Why is that the case?



### St. Augustine:

Augustine was a very smart boy and he loved to figure things out for himself. He would listen to his mother tell him about Jesus, but not without asking many questions and wondering if there wasn’t some other way.

One day he met a teacher, he spoke of another way of understanding the world. For many years, Augustine rejected his mother's faith in Jesus. This new way allowed him to have a lot more fun and promised him all kinds of worldly success.

Augustine's mother wasn't happy with her son's decisions. But what could she do? Augustine had said "No" to her and her faith in Jesus. She knew he had to figure it out for himself.

Augustine's mother began to pray for him, hoping that, one day, he would become a Christian.

At first, the news was not good. Augustine had travelled to Rome and had fallen into the wrong crowd. Instead of helping him find Jesus, his friends led him away from Jesus. Next, she heard that he had fallen in love and fathered a child. Though he had great love for the woman, they did not marry, and the relationship was ended as soon as it had begun.

Then he travelled to Milan and became somewhat famous. People loved to hear Augustine speak. But, the more Augustine shared his own ideas, the more he became to doubt them. Until, one day, he met the Bishop of Milan.

At first, his friends asked Augustine to argue against the Bishop, to reject the Christian faith. But the more Augustine listened to him, the more he realized that the Bishop was right. So much so, that Augustine began to study Christianity more closely and discovered a whole bunch of things he had not understood before.

Not long after, Augustine was baptized and returned home to visit his mom. Because of his great wisdom, his fame and his ability to share ideas, the people of his hometown asked Augustine to be their Bishop, to lead the Church in Northern Africa.

On reflecting on the years he searched for happiness, Augustine tells of his struggles and pains. "Late have I loved," he wrote to God. "Late have I loved you." Until his "No" became a "Yes", was he able to give his entire life to God.

As Bishop of that area, Augustine had to deal with a group of Christians who believed that God could only work with those who had said "Yes" to God from the beginning. They gave Augustine a hard time for having rejected God for so long. To them Augustine spoke of how God is kind, that he proves his great love for us by guiding us gently by the hands. Not all those who say "No" at the beginning, will say "No" at the end. And not all those who say "Yes" at the beginning, will say "Yes" at the end. By using examples from his own life, and that of the Bible, he taught them that God provides, even when we are weak; that he works in the life of everyone, even though we may not be open to him.



#### **Parenting Corner:**

Each child may require a different approach. For some, "white is black" and "black is white", they will always pick the opposite. Others will follow the lead of their parents quite naturally.

St. Monica (Augustine's mother) had her hands full with her son. Many times, she fell to her knees and prayed. Despite her failed attempts to speak to her son's heart, God found a way.



### **Mary, Undoer of Knots Devotion** (for those people dealing with difficult dilemmas)

This devotion, centered around a painting by Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner, has its origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and is said to have started with a man who approached his parish priest with a marital crisis. The priest, on hearing the many complications the couple was having, advised the man to pray to Mary and her ability to untie and disentangle the many problems from the past that kept the couple in an endless state of bitterness. In commemoration to Mary's response to the man's prayer, the painting was commissioned.

On seeing the painting during his studies in Germany as a young Jesuit, Pope Francis was deeply struck by the simplicity of bringing our problems, big or small, to the patient care of Mary. Prayer by prayer, and little by little, her fingers work diligently at untying each knot.

You may want to pray to her each day for the sake of the obstacles your child(ren) face (or place in the way of a good healthy relationship with you or with God). This devotion may also help in providing a vehicle to slowly untie the knots and obstacles that have cropped up in your relationship with your spouse, relative or friend.

#### **How to:**

1. Sign of the Cross.
2. **Opening Prayer:** Mary, undoer of knots, I entreat your power of intercession to untie all the knots dealing with (specific person, relationship or issue) that my own efforts have failed to undo. I ask that, out of the love you have for your children, you may apply your patient and diligent care as Mother of God to my petition.
3. **Prayers:** Lord's Prayer, 5 Hail Mary's, Glory Be to...
4. **Prayer of Thanksgiving:** Thank you, Mary, for the gift of your Son, the Redeemer of the world. May your "yes" ever resound in my heart and may it undo the many knots that prevent me from carrying out God's Will in my life. I ask this through Christ our Lord.
5. **Act of Contrition:** God, I am truly sorry, for all the sins I have committed, and the many times I have failed to serve you alone. Forgive me my sins and, in your gracious mercy, provide the reparation that is needed. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
6. Sign of the Cross.

#### **Family Exercise:**

You may want to introduce this devotion to your child(ren) in conjunction with St. Monica's prayers for her son (St. Augustine). Explain how some things take multiple steps and patience to resolve. Take some time to unravel a ball of wool that is in need of untangling. Explain how we can come to Mary, on a daily basis, to help us in untying the knots in our lives. (Find or draw an image of Mary, Undoer of Knots).



### **St. Gregory the Great (Pope)**

Gregory lived in a time when Rome had been destroyed and many of its people were suffering and were poor. Because his family were quite rich and had held a number of high positions, Gregory became Prefect of Rome at the age of 33.

Gregory did his best to help the poor people of Rome and he tried to fix many of the city's roads and services. But after a few years, the work became so hard that he decided to sell everything he had, gave the money to the poor and, with what he had left, he built a monastery and vowed to spend the rest of his life serving God as a monk.

Gregory loved being a monk. He loved living in a Christian community of men dedicated to a life of prayer, study and work. As far as he was concerned, he had never been so close to God.

A few years after Gregory became a monk, the people of Rome were struck by a serious illness. Many people died, including the Pope.

The people were desperate. There was so much death and destruction; they needed a strong leader. But who could they ask? They thought of young Gregory, the man who had been in charge of their city, not too many years ago.

When the news came to Gregory, he wasn't too happy. He had been in charge of the city before, and he didn't enjoy the task. Now they wanted to make him Pope, and give him even greater responsibility. He would have to leave his quiet life of prayer, study and work behind.

At first he said, "No. Find someone else to do the job." But after several of his closest friends and fellow Church officials spoke to him, he changed his mind. Saying "No" was hard, especially when God was calling him. Saying "Yes" would be just as hard, having to leave his quiet life of prayer, study and work behind.

Gregory was one of the best Pope's that ever lived. We now call him, "Gregory the Great". In the fourteen years he served as Pope, he did many things to improve the lives of the poor, to establish peace in the area, to spread Christianity to many different peoples, to advance our understanding of God and His teaching and to improve the celebration of the sacraments. Gregory is even credited for making music a big part of our Christian celebrations.

Gregory had a hard time saying "Yes" to God. The job God asked him to do was not easy. He tried saying "No" at first, but it didn't work. Saying "No" to God made him feel sorry and sad.

#### **Added Resources you may want to check out each week:**

[www.rclbenziger.com/Catholic-resources](http://www.rclbenziger.com/Catholic-resources)

1. Scroll down to: Prayers for Families.
2. On the sidebar: Saintsresource.com.

<https://rcsj.org/family-catechesis-resource-archive>

Archdiocese of St. John's Weekly Family reflection/activities on Sunday Readings.