***LSW***

children

 Year A

Twenty-sixth Ordinary Sunday

**Image**

Self-righteous people

**Points to note**

This is a short and simple parable, aimed very much at the Pharisee in us. Pharisees are still with us today, in some ways. When I was wondering around the London district of Stanford Hill one Saturday, where many orthodox Jews live, a little Jewish boy (complete with skullcap and braids) came up to me and asked me to ring the doorbell for him. To orthodox Jews who are not allowed to work on Saturday, touching something electrical is work.

Not just the Pharisee in us, but the children too. For some children, it may hit to close to home for comfort. Protracted quiet during the session may mean a great deal.

**Liturgy**

# Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

If anyone loves me he will keep my word,

and my Father will love him and we shall come to him.

Alleluia!

Gospel

*Explain to the children what a parable is. Explain the situation in Israel at the time of Jesus. There were Pharisees and priests who thought that because they knew God’s law and kept them, they were better than others who do not. They also believed that as descendants of Abraham, they will automatically go to heaven whatever they do.*

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with your spirit.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

 (Mt 21: 28-32)

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, “What do you think? A man has two sons. He went and said to the first, ‘My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I will not go’, but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, ‘Certainly, sir’ but did not go. Which of the two did the father’s will?” “The first,” they said. Jesus said to them, “I tell you truly, tax collectors and Gentiles are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you as a model of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and the Gentiles did. Even after seeing that, you refused to change your mind and believe him.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Discussions**

*Run through the story again and list all the different characters. Point out whom the different characters are supposed to represent: the father, God; the first son, the Pharisees; and the second son, the sinners. Discuss how the Pharisees see themselves as people destined for Paradise and how they see others who do not measure up to their standards of righteousness.*

*Discuss the meaning of the terms ‘the letter of the law’ and ‘the spirit of the law’. Give examples: when Mom says ‘No cookies before dinner’, eating sweets but not cookies would be obedience to the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law. Explain that God does not expect merely that we observe the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law as well. What he wants is that we do the right things for the right reasons. Link this up with the second son in the story of the Prodigal Son.*

*Explain that in the parable, Jesus does not condone the sins of the sinners. Nevertheless, he loves them because they repented. Link this up with the thief who repented while on the cross next to Jesus.*

Who are the modern day Pharisees? *Restrict the discussion to the types of situations where the children have encountered people who are self-righteous, and not the individuals themselves. We do not want a litany of other people’s sins.*  Do they find these people irritating?

*Among the examples could be those who scrupulously do all their own chores in the house but refuses to help in other chores as they are other people’s work; those who observe all the school rules but tell on others who do not without discussing with the offending person first; those who attend mass every Sunday and do good deeds because they think that that is all they need to do to get into heaven.*

Do we do these things? *There would normally be silence in addition to a few shaking of heads. Leave it to them to think about it and discuss how others feel if they see us doing the things we just mentioned – exactly the same thing that we mention about others.*

*Note that in all these, God is not looking at what is done but the intention. For instance, he does not want us to attend mass to chalk up a score for our eligibility for Paradise, but because we love him and his Church. In all things, love and only love should be the motivation.*