



# 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ord. Time Yr A

## Lectio Divina

**Lectio:** Jesus has entered the last stage of his life<sup>1</sup>. He will be in and around city of Jerusalem until he is taken to his Cross there. Jesus entered Jerusalem to the acclaim of the people but to the disturbance of the religious authorities (Palm Sun). He challenged the authorities even more with the clearing of the Temple. He spent the night in nearby Bethany. On returning to the city Jesus curses a fig tree with no fruit<sup>2</sup>. The tree immediately withers. The fig tree is a figure of the Jewish people who were not producing any fruit i.e. not responding to Jesus, God's Son. The authorities question Jesus' authority to do what he had done. Jesus asks them to attest where John the Baptist got his authority before he explains the origin of his authority. The authorities, not wanting to be trapped into believing, 'sit on the fence', by answering: "We do not know". So Jesus has got the authorities questioning their stubborn resistance to belief in him. Jesus still endeavours to change their minds about him. So he tells them parables that challenge their resistance but, on the other hand, gives them a way to 'save face'. They were refusing to believe in him but still they could change. Our parable, The Parable of the Two Sons, leads the authorities to affirm the hesitant son as 'honourable' (doing the father's will). Will they make the connections? Will they change their minds? The people (i.e. excluding authorities) particularly the "*tax collectors and prostitutes*", accepted John the Baptist as a prophet (viz: "*of true righteousness*") and acclaimed Jesus as their Saviour (Hosanna! = "Save Us!"). The authorities on the other hand were conflicted. They saw no need to change their lives i.e. for salvation. So, though they were inclined to accept John the Baptist as a prophet of God, they were indifferent to his call/message to repentance (re-thinking). Also, they were the leaders of the people !! What right did the people have to take the lead and lead them (the leaders) to the Saviour !!!

Read: **Matthew 21: 28 – 32**

**Meditatio:** Who is Jesus for me? How have I reacted when asked for my opinion? What do I think of religious authorities? Do I support Church leaders and my Parish in these difficult times? Do I seek to help others? Do I, before thinking things through, say: "No" to requests for help? Have I 'changed my mind'; did it cause me embarrassment or 'loss of face' – was it a moment of growth for me? Do I follow through with commitments that I have made? What do I think of people who are unreliable? Am I doing God the Father's will? Do I criticise others but don't critically look at what I am doing? Am I stubborn with no good reason? How vital is my faith to me? Do I know that I need Jesus and the forgiveness he alone has won for me? Do I learn from others? Am I sometimes a 'know it all'? Do I look down on or disregard people because I class them as inferior to me (e.g. *tax collectors and prostitutes* – Vs 31b – or: poor, unemployed, disadvantaged, uneducated, criminals)? Do I look to the lives of the Saints for inspiration and encouragement? Am I challenged by good (i.e. truly righteous) people? How hard is it for me to change my mind? Am I afraid of the consequences of changing my mind? Have I truly chosen to believe in Jesus? Am I following through on my choice for Jesus? Unable to gather for Mass at the moment, in what ways is my life changed because of my faith?

**Oratio:** Pray for faith in Jesus. Pray for Church leaders. Pray that children will honour their parents. Pray for the sharing of domestic duties in homes. Pray for victims of domestic violence. Pray for commitment to service. Pray that you will be true to your word. Pray for truthfulness and clarity in all we do. Pray that stubbornness will not blind us to reviewing our lives. Pray for those who stubbornly resist believing in Jesus. Pray that we will not 'label people' because of their profession or social standing. Pray that the lives of the Saints will inspire and encourage us in following Jesus.

**Contemplatio** – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

**After your prayer** — Help out with the domestic duties at home.

✍ Fr Joe

## **Matthew 21: 28 – 32**

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people. 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in my vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go", but afterwards thought better of it 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 solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

### Notes:

1 Jesus is no longer instructing the disciples but rather he is directing his words to the religious authorities i.e. "*the chief priests and the elders of the people*". This opening line is not in the Bible text but is added for clarity to the liturgical Reading. In the Bible texts, Jesus starts speaking with the Authorities at Mt 21:23 when they challenge his authority.

2 This will be expanded further in next Sunday's Gospel – The Parable of the Tenants – Mt 21:33-43