

Dear Friends,

Today's Gospel, the parable of the two sons, raises the issue of commitment. The first son, when instructed by his father to go out in the vineyard and work, responds by rejecting his father's request, but then changes his mind and goes out. He realizes his infidelity as his father's son, repents, and goes out to fulfill his commitment. The second son, on being asked to do the same, says he will do what his father asks, but then does nothing. His initial words reveal that he knows what is expected of him as his father's son, but his lack of action shows that he's not committed to their relationship. Recall that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus stressed the need for action; speech alone, he said, is not enough: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21).

Jesus uses the parable to instruct us to make our commitment to him a reality in our lives, not simply by our words, but more importantly through our deeds. The Gospel, our Baptismal Promises, our Profession of Faith are only words until our actions give full expression to those words in our relationships with God, the Church and others; calling ourselves Christians and disciples of Jesus means nothing until our lives express that identity in the values we uphold and the beliefs we live. Christ demands that as his present day disciples we express our faith not just in the prayers we speak and the rituals we perform but in the work we do, the acts of compassion and charity we undertake and in the relationships we form.

The words of the Gospel must be lived; Jesus' teachings on justice, reconciliation and love must be the light that guides us, the path we walk, the work we undertake. Discipleship is not simply saying words with our lips, but with a commitment to God in our hearts, where we realize Christ's presence in our lives and in the lives of others and then honor that presence in faithful deeds. Though commitment seems to be going out of style in this 21st century, commitment is never out of style for the Christian.

On a similar note I want to express my deep gratitude to those in our parish who committed themselves to working on our annual parish picnic last Sunday. It was a great day. Thank you to Mary Amen, the picnic chair, and her committee and team of volunteers, thirty or more individuals. You did a truly wonderful job as was evidenced by the enjoyment so many experienced. Thank you.

Peace and blessings,

Father John