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## Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Intermediate

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Thu, 08/21/2014 - 20:00

### **Intermediate Session**

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Matthew 21:28-32

### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray.

O God,

you made us to love you and each other.

Help us to make choices that show our love for you.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

### **Opening Life Reflection**

Today's topic is moral decision-making. To begin distribute blank sheets of white paper and pencils. In the center of the paper, instruct the children to draw a large circle with a handle to represent a mirror. Invite the children to think about themselves and write down in the mirror how others can see Jesus in them. Discuss:

- How do others see Jesus in you?
- What does Jesus teach us about how to live?
- How can the choices you make show that you follow Jesus?

Allow time for discussion. Jesus teaches us how to live a moral life. We show that we are followers of Jesus when we make good choices.

### **Listening to the Word of God**

In the Old Testament reading, listen to what Ezekiel tells the people about making good choices.



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Read Ezekiel 18:25-28.

Allow for silence.

### **Scripture Discussion Starters**

- What are the people complaining about?
- How does Ezekiel respond to the people?
- What happens to the good person who turns away from goodness?
- What happens when the wicked turn away from sin and make good choices?

In the gospel reading, Jesus tells a story about two sons. Listen to find out which one has a change of heart.

Read Matthew 21:28-32.

Allow for silence.

- What happens to the two sons in the story?
- Which son has a change of heart?
- What does Jesus teach about making good choices?
- Why will sinners enter the kingdom of God?

### **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the **Catechist Background** section.

In the first reading from the Old Testament, Ezekiel responds to the people's complaints about God being unfair. The people of Israel at this time in history believed in inherited guilt, which is the idea that blame for the fault of the parent falls on the children. Ezekiel attempts to show that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. A person who sins can actually have a change of heart and be forgiven. This message was important for the Israelites in exile to hear because it gave them hope.



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In today's gospel Jesus tells a story about two sons who are faced with a moral decision. With their decision to change course, Jesus helps his listeners recognize themselves in the story. With today's parable Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is available to sinners just as much as it is available to the righteous. All that is needed is a decision for change, a change of mind and heart.

### **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- Do you ever complain about God's ways?
- How do you follow Jesus with words and actions?
- Why is a change of heart needed for sinners to enter the kingdom of God?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life**.]

### **Doctrinal Discussion Starters**

#### ***Moral Decision Making***

Living a moral life is about freely responding to a loving God. We have the freedom to choose what is right and what is wrong. We can turn to God to help us make good moral choices. God's law is written on our hearts. Catholics rely on Church tradition, scripture and the support of the teaching authority of the Church to help interpret God's law. Our conscience also helps us choose between right and wrong.

Catholic teaching emphasizes that the morality of our actions depends on three things: The object, the intention, and the circumstances. First, the object of our moral act is what we knowingly choose to do or not do. The object may be good or evil. Second, the intention is our motive for choosing a moral act. Our purpose for doing the action affects the goodness or evil of the action. A good intention cannot turn an evil act into a good act. The end does not justify the means. A bad intention, however, can turn a good act into an evil one. Third, the circumstances are the details surrounding the act. Circumstances increase or lessen the goodness or evil of a moral act. Catholic moral teaching holds that for an action to be judged as morally good, all three things, (the object itself, the intention, and the circumstances) must be good.

Throughout our lives we are faced with moral choices. Church teaching can help us make good decisions. Through prayer, listening to church teaching and seeking advice from people we trust, we can arrive at a good moral decision, in agreement with our conscience.

- How can we follow Jesus' example today?
- What helps you arrive at a good moral decision?
- Why are we responsible for our choices?

### **Sacrament Connection**

The sacrament of Baptism joins us with Christ. For those who have been baptized in Christ, God has revealed a way of living in the world. We live our baptism when we make good moral decisions.

### **The Gospel in Life**



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This week what can you do to show others that you are a follower of Jesus?

**Categories:**

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