

26th Sun A
Promise Keepers

Introduction...

Today's Gospel provides us with a challenge.
Jesus challenges us to follow our commitments.
Let's take a look at that.

Refrain... Yes Lord, I will follow you.

I Yes or No

Recently I celebrated a Baptism with friends of mine.
As the Baptismal rite began I addressed this question to the parents:

You have asked to have your child baptized.

In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith.

It will be your duty to bring him up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor.

Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

The parents' response was...

We do.

Just before the Baptism of the infant I asked these questions of the parents, godparents, and those assembled:

Do you believe in God?... in Jesus Christ?... in the Holy Spirit?

Do you reject Satan? ... Yes!

And all his works? ... Yes!

And all his empty promises? ... Yes!

If we say we believe, then this should influence the way we live, our values, our ideals and our actions.

Jesus came to reveal to us God's ways of living... God's dream for our broken world.

We know that following Jesus is a challenge and we're not always perfect.

We all stumble and fall.

But our commitment is clear... to be the kind of people God wants us to be. Jesus promises to help us, to strengthen us, and even to heal us when we stumble along the road of our commitment to follow him.

**Jesus asks: Will you follow me?
Refrain... Yes Lord, I will follow you.**

II How We Live

Question...

Do you believe in God? ... Yes!

Do you reject Satan? ... Yes!

And all his works? ... Yes!

And all his empty promises? ... Yes!

There is another question that can be asked at a Baptism...

*Do you refuse to be **mastered** by sin?*

If we believe in God that means that we are not the measurer of life. God is.

We are not the captain of the ship. God is.

If we believe in God that means that we yield our will to a higher power...
God.

If we believe in God that means that we obey God's ways.
"Obey" – not a popular word in our culture.

*We live in a culture that preaches something very different...
Have it your way!*

*You are the measure of what is right and wrong,
permissible and impermissible,
allowed and not allowed.*

*If you feel something is ok, then it's ok.
If everyone else is doing it, then it's ok.
If everyone cheats in school, then it's ok.
If bullying in school is glossed over, then it's ok.
If classmates do drugs, and it makes them feel good, then it's ok.*

If the highly paid executives of business lie and cook the books or push the envelop... then it must be ok

*If it happens on TV, then it's ok.
Acting like Desperate Housewives must be ok.*

*This kind of thinking and acting happens too often in society.
If you don't agree our cultural habits, then there's something wrong with you.*

As a matter of fact, many of the people in Jesus' society didn't like the way he acted...
and they rose up against him and tried to crush him.
Want to follow Jesus?
Then you better look good on wood.

We Christians follow the beat of a different drum...
the beat of the heart of Jesus...
But so often our hearts are cluttered or hardened.
We must ask Jesus to unclutter our hearts, to unharden our hearts.

**Jesus asks: Will you follow me?
Refrain... Yes Lord, I will follow you.**

III Virtuous Living

Another way of describing this is to say that Jesus challenges us to be people of virtue, committed to his way of life.
Let's take a brief look at that.

Virtuous Living

When we speak of "virtuous" living we speak of *virtue*.
A virtue is an enduring, stable quality of character or intellect through which a person is enabled to act in a praiseworthy or morally good way.

What are some ways of acting virtuously? What are some of the virtues...

Hmm... virtues... I haven't heard that word on TV lately or seen it on my tablet.

Virtues... what are they?

- Integrity... solidity of character / honest / trustworthy / responsible // against workaday mendacity (lying) // living truthfully and authentically... **vs**, for example, cheating and talking about you behind your back
- Fairness... treating people fairly and equally, including subordinates // recognize the value of everyone and play by the same rules with everyone ... the Golden Rule, **vs**, for example, cheat 'em, beat 'em, and leave 'em bleeding.
- Compassion... this is a very typically Christian virtue. What is compassion? You'll know it when you see it.

Story

At the Seattle Special Olympics a number of years ago nine contestants, all physical or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

At the gun they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "this will make it better." Then all linked arms and walked together to the finish line, arm in arm.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

There's something beautiful about this story...

Remember, beauty is a trait of God.

This story shows us what it means to be to be people of compassion.

Life is not only about winning all of the time.

Life is not only about being number one all the time.

Life is not just about having lots of money and fame and recognition.

Rather, life is also about having about compassion on others,

Life is about helping others and not just being concerned about oneself.

I believe that's God's way.

That's how Jesus lived.

Conclusion...

As we continue with this Mass, let's ask the Lord to help us to live up to the commitment of our Baptismal vows, those vows we renew each year at Easter time.

And so I ask you...

Do you believe in God? ... Yes!

Do you reject Satan? ... Yes!

And all his works? ... Yes!

And all his empty promises? ... Yes!

Do you believe in Jesus and His way?... Yes!

At communion time let us pray to the Lord...

Jesus, come into our minds and hearts.

Strengthen us.

Transform our hearts.

Help us to be the people you want us to be.

When we stumble and fall, pick us up.

Help us to be people of integrity, fairness, promise keepers, truthfulness and especially compassion.

Jesus asks: Will you follow me?

Refrain... Yes Lord, I will follow you.