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Actions speak louder than words...When it comes to obeying the will of God, what we do speaks louder than what we say... That's the message Jesus delivers to the Pharisees and Scribes in today's Gospel,...and that's the theme of my homily. this pm/am....I'm going to start with a story about a guy who was driving along when a car cuts in front of him almost driving him off the road...He gets so angry that at the next stop light, he opens his window and starts to scream and curse at the idiot driver...flips him the bird, and insults the guy's mother. Unfortunately., a cop in a patrol car sees the whole thing, pulls over the angry driver and makes him get out of his car...The guy protests, "Officer, I didn't break any law."...The cop says, "You're right,... but when I saw the WWJD sticker and the Christian fish symbol on your bumper and the pro-life license plates, I figured this has gotta be a stolen car." ..That driver's actions said a lot more about him than those messages he had plastered on his car.

Jesus uses the parable of the two sons to come down hard on the Jewish religious leaders who surely recognized themselves as the second son – you know, big on words, short on actions..They professed their faith in God;..they could recite every syllable of the Jewish religious laws...and every word of Sacred Scripture, but they had rejected John the Baptist's call to repentance. They refused to admit their need to repent from their sinfulness and to do the will of God....Jesus shocks them when He tells them that tax collectors and prostitutes would go to heaven before any of them,... because even though those notorious sinners had at first said NO to God,...they later repented and did the will of the Father – just like the 1st son in the par...In God's eyes, doing the right things... always trumps just saying the right things.

Many years ago,...Cathy and I took our daughter Carrie to her first semester at Fordham – a Catholic University ...After we dropped her off, we stopped at a little restaurant...We were the only ones there except for another couple who had also dropped off their child at Fordham. We took a table a couple of tables from theirs...After a few minutes, an African American family of six came in and sat down at the restaurant's only large table,... very near that other couple. About a min later, **that other** couple – presumably Catholic - got up from their table and moved to a table some ways away from the family of six. ...Cathy and I looked at each other in somewhat disbelief, and wondered: why did that couple move, and how did that African American family feel when they did?...A sad case of actions speaking much louder than words.

Of course, words are very important to our Christian faith...especially the words in the Bible – the inspired Word of God,...and, no one's words are more meaningful, more profound, and have more effect on the world than the words of Jesus Christ....He never wrote them down. He never wrote a book...Others did that for Him...What He did was travel from town to town speaking, preaching, teaching God's message to all who would listen. ...He spoke powerful words about God's amazing love and mercy,...about our need to love God and love one another...love our enemies,...about forgiving one another... how to care for the hungry, the needy...and much more... But all of those powerful words Jesus used ? ...They wouldn't have made even a ripple in the history of the world,...they would've all been quickly forgotten... if He hadn't lived His words,...if He hadn't lived what He taught and preached. ...His actions spoke more loudly than even His words.

And that's what Jesus asks of us...He wants our faith to be more than what we say we believe,...more than just words in a book... We can read those words day after day,...hear them proclaimed and preached week after week in this church,...but we only get to know and understand what they truly mean when we put them into practice,...In 1John 3:18,...the writer exhorts the early Christian community: "Let us **NOT** love with words or tongue, but with actions and truth."...FAITH is not a bunch of words...It is what we do to live out those words...FAITH is not a noun....It's a verb! It's an action!..It's what we do!

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus told His disciples: "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."
...Jesus wants us to do more than know about Him and pray to Him...He wants us to FOLLOW Him, and to do the will of the Father as He did.

When we pray the Our Father, and we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," we are praying that what God wants will be done here on earth. ..because that's a good thing...But, we have to do more than pray for that...we have to do it. We have to help it happen...Most of the time we know what God's will is for us, don't we? ...

- We know that God wants us to forgive when someone has hurt us
- We know that God wants us to stay away from situations where we could be tempted to do wrong
- We know that God wants us to stop acting on our prejudices and making unfair judgments
- We know what God wants us to do when we are struggling with a moral decision
- We know that God wants us to do more when we see people in need
- We know that God wants us to set aside time to read the Bible and to pray more

We usually know what God wants us to do...don't we?...And yet, - like the first son in the parable – there'll be times when we just don't want to do it.... It's too hard...or too inconvenient...or doesn't fit into our plans,...or we're not quite ready...Now that first son finally did what his father asked him to do...Jesus didn't tell why that son changed his mind....I like to think it was out of gratitude for all that his old man had done for him...In the same way,.. when we are resisting doing God's will,...it's our gratitude for all God has done for us that should move us to do what He wants us to do...And where better to express our gratitude and thanks than at this Eucharistic Celebration?

Because the word "Eucharist" is the Greek word for "thanksgiving"...The main purpose of our being here is for you and me to get down on our knees and give thanks and praise to God for everything He has given us, ..everything:... our health, our ability to work and to play,...our possessions,... our family, ... our life,.. and the greatest gift - the gift of His Son whose loving sacrifice we memorialize on this altar,...whose suffering, death and resurrection have given us the hope of an eternal home in heaven...All UNDESERVED gifts from a God whose love for us has no limit...And what does God ask of us ?..All He asks is our gratitude, and to show our gratitude by making a sincere effort to do what He asks, to do His will, even when His will is hard.

But God doesn't expect us to do it without help...He gives us all we need every time we celebrate Eucharist,.. He gives us the Living Bread. – Jesus Christ - who becomes one with us when we take Him into ourselves, ...so that when we walk out that door, we have the living Jesus inside us... to give us strength and courage and faith, whatever we need, to do what we know God wants us to do...

In the parable, the father sent his son out into his vineyard, to do the work He needed him to do....At the end of Mass, our heavenly Father sends us out into His vineyard – the world – to do the work He needs us to do...That work is to bring Jesus Christ into our small part of His vineyard,...where we live, where we work, where we play...so that others may see Jesus in us, and know Jesus not just by what we say, but by what we do.

I am going to end with the story of a young boy who went up to the priest after Mass and asked him, "Father,you told us that after we receive Communion, we have Jesus in us, and if we really believe that,.. we will become more like Him. Right?"...The priest answered, "Yes, that's right, Tommy." ..."Then, Father, how will I be able to see that I've become more like Jesus?"

The wise old priest looked the boy in the eye and said, "Tommy, It's not so important that YOU be able to see it...What's more important is that OTHERS can see it." AMEN!