

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO CHANGE

One of the greatest blessings from this weekend's Gospel is the assurance that it is never too late to change.

Sometimes we look at our past and say, "I have gone too far." Sometimes we look at another person and say, "That person will never change." But God does not look at us that way. He believes in conversion. As St. Jerome reminds us, "We do not seek in penance how long a man has lived in sin, but how he lives now."

That is why God promised: when the wicked repents, he shall live. God is not only interested in where we have fallen, but in what we can become.

The story of the two sons gives us a beautiful example. The first son said "No" to his father but later repented and obeyed. The second said "Yes" but never went. God is not looking for people who only know how to say the right words. He wants hearts willing to change.

St. John Chrysostom, preaching on this Gospel, says: "Do you have sins? Do not despair. Even if you sin every day, repent every day... For it is never too late to repent." The Fathers teach us that God does not measure the time of our coming, but the fervor of our return.

Perhaps we have all been like the first son at times: "No, Lord, I don't want to forgive. I am not ready to change." But the good news is that the story did not end with "No." He changed his mind. That is the Gospel of hope.

St. Paul gives us the perfect Son as our model — Jesus. He did not merely speak about humility, He humbled Himself. He did not speak about obedience; He obeyed unto death.

I recall a man who had spent years making poor choices. His family had lost trust in him. When asked to try again, he said, "It's too late." The reply was simple: "You cannot change yesterday. But you can change today."

He began small — one apology, one prayer. Trust was slowly rebuilt. That is how conversion works. Grace first changes the direction of our heart, then our life follows.

St. Augustine, who himself came to God late, prayed: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new!" His life proves no one is beyond grace.

So today, if you have neglected prayer, it is not too late to begin again. If you have hurt someone, it is not too late to say sorry. If you have wandered from God, it is not too late to come home.

Do not be a prisoner of your past. The vineyard is still waiting. Our vineyard is our marriage, family, workplace, parish, community and heart. And God continues to say: "Go and work in my vineyard." Amen.