

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

September 27, 2026 · Lectionary 136

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 18:25–28

Thus says the LORD: You say, “The LORD’s way is not fair!” Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, and does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not; in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

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by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church***



SECOND READING

Philippians 2:1–11

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:28–32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: “What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ He said in reply, ‘I will not,’ but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, ‘Yes, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did his father’s will?” They answered, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.”

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 136. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092726.cfm

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Reflection

Ezekiel confronts the complaint that God's way is unfair by pointing us back to the possibility of conversion: the one who turns and does what is right shall live. Paul then gives the deepest pattern of conversion—Christ's self-emptying humility, the refusal to grasp status, and obedience even to death on a cross. In the Gospel, Jesus exposes the gap between saying yes and doing the Father's will. The first son begins with refusal but changes and obeys; the second sounds obedient but never acts. These readings form a leader who values repentance over appearances, humility over status, and actual obedience over impressive words.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Conversion Matters More Than the Starting Point

Ezekiel says the one who turns from wickedness and does what is right shall live (Ez 18:27). We must never keep people in their past. God honors the turn.

PRINCIPLE 2

Humility Is the Mind of Christ

Paul commands us to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, who emptied himself (Phil 2:5–7). Leadership shaped by Christ is grounded in humility and does not grasp status; it seeks to serve our brothers and sisters.

PRINCIPLE 3

Look to the Interests of Others

Paul says not to look only to your own interests, but also to those of others (Phil 2:4). We are called not to self-protection but rather to active attention to the good of others.

PRINCIPLE 4

Obedience Is More Than Saying Yes

The second son said yes but did not go (Mt 21:30). Leaders can sound obedient while remaining unchanged. God is not impressed by the language of obedience when action never follows.

PRINCIPLE 5

Leave Room for Late Repentance

The first son refused, then changed his mind and went (Mt 21:29). Those who serve God must make room for people to change, return, and become faithful after an imperfect beginning.

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Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Ezekiel says the one who turns and does what is right shall live (Ez 18:27). Is there a situation where you need to continue to pray that change is still possible—for yourself or for someone you lead?

QUESTION 2

Paul tells us to humbly regard others as more important than ourselves (Phil 2:3). In what relationship or leadership situation is your pride making that difficult?

QUESTION 3

Christ did not grasp equality with God but emptied himself (Phil 2:6–7). Where are you being called to release the temptation to grasp status, control, or recognition? Where do you need to empty yourself, and to humbly serve God?

QUESTION 4

The second son said yes but did not go (Mt 21:30). Contemplate a situation where your words are more obedient than your actions.

QUESTION 5

The first son changed his mind and went (Mt 21:29). Is there a place where you need to reverse course, admit your first response was wrong, and act faithfully now?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, choose one area where you have said “yes” in words but not in action. Make the obedience concrete within 48 hours: send the message, schedule the meeting, apologize, serve quietly, or complete the task. Let your action become the real yes.

***“He said in reply, ‘I will not,’ but afterwards changed his mind and went.” —
Matthew 21:29***

Closing Prayer

Lord God, your way is just and merciful. Thank you that turning is still possible and that the one who repents and does what is right shall live.

Jesus, give us your mind: humble, self-emptying, obedient, and willing to serve. Strip away our grasping for status and make us leaders who descend in love.

Holy Spirit, make our yes real. Close the gap between words and action, intention and obedience, appearance and truth. Teach us your paths and guide us in your truth. Amen.

“Remember your mercies, O Lord.” — Psalm 25:6