

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, famous for his tv and radio talk shows, and who is in the process of beatification, used to talk about three surprises in heaven.

First surprise that I will be there. For many Catholics this may not be a big surprise. Because we all want and expect to be in heaven.

The second, surprise will that the people whom I expected to be in heaven are not there.

And finally, the third surprise, the biggest of all the surprises will be, to see those people I thought would never go to heaven are there.

For the listeners of Jesus, who heard in today's Gospel, it must have come as a biggest surprise of life when Jesus told them “ tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.”

Through the parable of the two sons Jesus is telling that even the sinners like tax collectors and prostitutes have a chance to go to heaven. At the time of Jesus, tax collectors and prostitutes were the most despised of all people by the religious leaders. And now, Jesus is telling that they are going to heaven. What a surprise?

If Jesus were talking to us now, he would probably say, “The drug addicts, the alcoholics, the gang members, are making their way into the kingdom of God before you”.

Jesus was a teacher par excellence. So, he begins his teaching taking the example from ordinary family life. What is your opinion? This is a provocative question. This draws attention of the listeners immediately and get them involved.

A man had two sons. Jesus tells the story of a father who says to one of his sons "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today". The young man replies, "I will not," but afterwards changed his mind and went. The father then says the same thing to his other second son. He said in reply, "Yes, sir," but did not go.

Most of the listeners were fathers of families and must have known these matters from personal experience.

In our families, the parents must deal with similar situations. Mom says, son make your bed and the son will answer yes Mom. But the bed is never made. We could hear most parents say to their children, how many times do I have to tell you this.

*Which of the two did the father's will?* Jesus ends the parable by making explicit His initial question. The priests and elders answer promptly, "The first." The answer came quickly because the matter concerned a familiar situation, well known and evident, one

that they experienced in their own families and, most probably, practiced by them (and by all of us) when they were young.

Thus in reality the answer is a judgment, not on the two sons in the parable, but also on themselves. By answering, *the first*, they were judging their own attitudes. For, in times past, they had so often told their father, "I will not go!" but then went under pressure of circumstances or because remorse led them to do what the father asked. In their reply they showed themselves as if they were obedient children.

Using the reply given by the priests and elders as a key, Jesus applies the parable to the failure of religious leaders to accept the teaching of John the Baptist and his own teaching for conversion.

The reply they gave becomes their own condemnation when Jesus says, *I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you!*

According to this sentence, it is the tax collectors, prostitutes, and gentiles like the Samaritan woman, who, at first, had said *no* to the father but then did the will of the Father. These religious leaders listening to Jesus were very well aware that tax collectors like, Zacchaeus, Mathew and so called prostitute like Mary Magdalen who had washed the feet of Jesus, with her tears, Samaritan woman who was leading an immoral life, repented and did the will of God by accepting Christ. Whereas they, the priests and elders, were the ones who, at first, had said *yes*, to the father, like the second son, because they were the chosen race by God, but did not do the will of the Father

Just like the second son, we all have said yes to the Father at the time of our baptism and our confirmation. Are we acting on this yes into our day today living? Or do we say, yes only on Sundays or when we come to the church and later completely forget about yes?

If you have failed to act on your yes, there is still time to change it by doing the will of the father in daily living be helping and serving the needy and especially those most vulnerable like the unborn babies.

You can implement your yes into action, in by doing something to help those, helpless unborn babies.