**26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [28th September, 2014]**

READINGS: Ezekiel 18:25-28 / Philippians 2:1-11 / Matthew 21:28-32

THEME: SECOND CHANCE

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INTRODUCTION

Today I have entitled the message, ‘SECOND CHANCE’. I guess some people are immediately thinking of the movie series entitled ‘Second Chance’. But that is not the reason for choosing this title, for I can’t even mention a name of any of the actors of that movie. I’ve chosen this title because, God says, He is giving us a SECOND CHANCE. In other words, He is forgiving us. In fact, He gives us a SECOND CHANCEnot only once, but as often as we request for it.

WHY SHOULD THE REPENTANT BE FORGIVEN?

In the first reading (Ezek. 18:25-28), the Jews were not happy that the sinner who repents is forgiven, as against the good person who later becomes a wicked person. Jesus in turnexplains that the sinner who repents is forgiven because he/she is like the son who initially refused to work on his father’s farm, but later changed his mind went to do the work (Mt. 21:28-32).

Thus,the sinner who repents is forgiven because:

He or she has regretted his or her bad deeds and resolved not to return to them;

He or she realizes that his or her life depends on God; and

He or she realizes that life should be lived as willed by God, the Giver-of-life.

WHY THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON WHO TURNS EVIL IS NOT FORGIVEN IF HE DOESN’T REPENT

Whilst we will enjoy God’s second chance if we repent from our sins, the prophet Ezekiel says, if we change from being good persons and become wicked we will be punished by the Lord. Why? Jesus illustrates why this is so by saying that the second son said ‘I will go, sir’, but he didn’t go to the farm.

Here is another illustration: take someone who begins a long distance race (e.g. 10,000m) with the speed of Usain Bolt (while receiving all the cheers in the stadium). But then he stops after the first lap. In that case, his initial good speed or performance comes to nothing, and he will receive no reward or medal. Similarly, if we backslide in our Christian life and remain so till death, we will receive no reward from God.

CONCLUSION

I began by talking about the SECOND CHANCE that God gives us. Indeed, God is ever-willing to forgive us. This SECOND CHANCE is given not only once, but as often as we request for it. Thus, even backsliders have several SECOND CHANCES. Now, as a driver has to periodically renew his license, so let us approach the Lord today to renew the ‘licenses’ of our SECOND CHANCE.

I am processing the renewal of the license of my SECOND CHANCE right now! What about you? Beloved, if you wish to renew yours then join me in saying:

LORD JESUS, I AM IN NEED OF A SECOND CHANCE RIGHT NOW! YOU GAVE THE THIEF ON THE CROSS WHO REPENTED A SECOND CHANCE, AND YOU FAVOURED HIM WITH THE JOY OF PARADISE! SO, OVERLOOK MY MANY SINS, AND GIVE ME TODAY THE JOY OF A SECOND CHANCE! AMEN!

Beloved, we have processed the renewal of God’s mercy towards us. Subsequently, in the course of the week, let us see a priest (at the confessional) to collect the ‘licenses’ of our renewed SECOND CHANCE. Amen!