

Back when I was in Kindergarten, our big final project was to make something out of clay. Now this wasn't Play-Doh™. This was real clay; the kind that has to be sent out and fired in a kiln.

Most of the boys made snakes. The girls made flowers. I, for some reason lost to me 41 years later, wanted to make Humpty Dumpty – before he fell off the wall.

A week after our experience with wet clay, we were given back our objects which were now hardened. The boy sitting next to me asked to look at my egg-shaped piece of clay, and tried to squish it and stretch it, to no avail; finally banging it on the table. He asked me, “What is it supposed to be? A rock?” I took it back, shocked at his lack of imagination, and said “It's Humpty Dumpty.”

When his arrived, it was the ever-popular coiled snake. He didn't touch it and just looked at it. He told me, “When I get home, I'm going to un-coil it.” I said to him, “Why don't you do it now?”

SNAP!

His snake was now in two pieces, and he started to cry. When the teacher came over, she asked him, “What happened?” He pointed at me and said, “He broke it.”

No amount of explaining on my part saved me from my fate in the corner. I was banished for the day from art class. Humpty Dumpty never got painted, and was forever a dull grayish color.

In today's Gospel, we hear about two sons. They are both sent into the vineyard by their father. One says, “Yes,” but never does any work. The other says, “No,” but has a change of heart and goes to work. Jesus ends the parable there, but I want to know – what happened that night at the dinner table? Did the “Yes” son get thanked by his Father for doing such a good job, while the “No” son is sent to his room hungry, even though he did all the work?

The world judges based on appearances. If you or I were the father in the Gospel parable, which son would we praise at the end of the day? That is, if we didn't know who did all the work? The outward appearance is that the son who said “Yes” must have been the one who did the work.

Often times, the world has no room for repentance. Either a person's past is remembered and held up as if they have no hope of changing; or else someone makes one mistake, and that is used as the measure of all of their actions.

God doesn't work that way. And for human beings, it doesn't seem fair.

Someone who repents on their death bed gets in to heaven; while someone who has lived a life of virtue but before they die turns to iniquity ... well, let's hope there's air conditioning.

God sees the inside AND the outside. We only see the outside. Only God can judge both the actions and the motivations; we only know the actions. That is what is meant when we're told to judge actions, but not to judge the person.

We can see that a person has done something wrong. But we don't know what has happened with them on the inside. Maybe they've repented. Or else we can see a person who seems to do everything right. Yet we don't see what may be lurking inside of them.

Only God knows, and we have to give the benefit of the doubt. That is, we need to operate out of love.

And, if I can leave you with one word – a nice 13 point Scrabble™ word – it would be INTEGRITY; which comes from the Latin word for “whole” or “perfect.” Our own wholeness or perfection is not something we can do without living in Jesus Christ. It is only through grace that we can consistently walk the walk, and talk the talk. If that weren't the case, we wouldn't need a redeemer.

But we do NEED a redeemer. And we do HAVE a redeemer – JESUS CHRIST.

And Saint Paul, in the second reading, tells us to put on the mind of Jesus so that we can experience, in the Spirit: love, compassion, mercy, and joy. Having one mind, one love, one heart, and one thought – all coming from living in the love of the Trinity.

So let us take some time this week to pray that God might reveal to us where we may be lacking in integrity, missing out on the wholeness that is ours. And may we, through grace, repent of whatever it may be – and then embraced in the mercy of our redeemer, attain a greater level of wholeness in the mind and heart of our loving God.