

Homily for 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In 1964 the movie “Mary Poppins” took the world by storm. It is an amusing child’s film filled with cute phrases and witty music.

There is, however, a scene in the movie that speaks rather poignantly to today’s Gospel. At the end of her first day as the new Nanny, Mary is putting the two children to bed. Little Jane asks Mary: “You will never leave us, will you?” Her younger brother quickly adds his own thought: “Will you stay if we promise to be good?”

Mary Poppins smiles and replies, “That’s a pie-crust promise. Easily made. Easily broken.”

The Gospel today is a warning about making “pie-crust promises.” The story of the two brothers, one who promises and does nothing and one who balks but achieves the task, is meant to remind us that God is not interested in words but in actions. Faith is not a matter of knowing what to say. Rather, faith is a matter of knowing what to do.

It reminds me of an ancient Japanese legend that tells of a man who dies and goes to heaven. Heaven is beautiful beyond words. But in his journey through paradise the man comes upon a room lined with shelves. On the shelves are stacks of human ears. A heavenly guide

explains that these ears belonged to all the people on earth who listened each week to the Word of God, but never acted on God's teachings. Their worship never resulted in action. Therefore, only their ears ended up in heaven.

“Pie-crust” promises and ears that hear with no actions to follow are sadly more common than we would like to admit. God isn't interested in our telling others “I am a person of faith.” God is interested in our showing others how much we are a person of faith by what we say and by what we do.