

JANUARY 19 2026 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

There was a little boy named Daniel. One afternoon, Daniel's mother asked him to clean his room before dinner. When she came back an hour later, she found the room exactly as she had left it—clothes on the floor, toys scattered everywhere, and the bed still unmade. But Daniel came running toward her with pride and excitement. In his hands was a colourful crayon drawing of their family. “Look, Mommy! I made this for you!” he said joyfully. His mother smiled warmly and told him she loved the drawing, but she also gently reminded him that what she had asked for was his obedience. Daniel offered a gift, yes—but not the one she wanted. This simple story captures a profound truth: sometimes we give God the gifts we prefer, while avoiding the obedience He desires.

This theme comes through vividly in our first reading. King Saul behaved much like Daniel, but with far more serious consequences for himself and for the nation. God had given Saul a very clear and direct command. Instead of following it, Saul did what seemed good in his own eyes. When Samuel confronted him, Saul attempted to justify his actions by claiming that he had saved the best of the animals “to sacrifice to the Lord.” It sounded noble and religious, but Samuel saw through it immediately. God had not asked for a sacrifice; He had asked for obedience. Samuel then delivers one of the most important lines in the Old Testament: “Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission better than the fat of rams.” In other words, God wants a listening heart more than offerings. He prefers surrender over rituals that mask stubbornness.

Saul's real problem was not that he failed to sacrifice—he actually intended to offer something to God. His problem was that he offered it instead of obeying. His outward religious gesture hid an inner refusal to

surrender. Samuel exposes this attitude when he compares Saul's stubbornness to idolatry. When we place our will above God's will, we begin to worship ourselves. Saul wanted to appear devout while maintaining control. That pride cost him his kingship.

In the Gospel, Jesus addresses a similar issue from a different angle. The Pharisees and even the disciples of John the Baptist notice that Jesus' disciples do not fast the way others do. Fasting was a long-standing religious practice, so they ask Jesus why His followers are not observing it. Jesus responds with the beautiful and joyful image of a wedding: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" He is teaching that His presence changes everything. Rituals are good, but they must match the moment. Then He offers the famous example of new wine and old wineskins. New wine represents His teaching, His presence, His grace—the new life of the Gospel. Old wineskins symbolize rigid hearts, fixed attitudes, and external religious practices that lack inner renewal. Attempting to pour the newness of Christ into an unyielding heart leads to a rupture. We must become new wineskins—open, flexible, humble, and ready.

Both readings, therefore, deliver a unified message: God desires obedience that flows from love, not rituals offered in place of true conversion. Saul is the model of the old wineskin—rigid, self-righteous, unwilling to let God stretch him. Jesus invites us to become new wineskins—disciples eager to let God reshape and renew our hearts.

Do we sometimes give God the gifts we choose while avoiding the obedience He asks? Do we pray, attend Mass, or serve the parish while holding on to resentment, grudges, habits, or sins? Are there areas in our life where we say, "Anything but that, Lord"? Perhaps God is inviting us to forgive someone we find difficult, to reach out to a family member

we've ignored, to return to confession, to let go of a hidden habit, or to trust Him in a painful situation. These are the "rooms" in our lives that He asks us to cleanse.

Christ the Bridegroom is with us. He pours the new wine of His grace into us daily. Let us not cling to old excuses or familiar patterns that hold us back. Instead, let us become new wineskins—open, surrendered, and eager to follow Him. May our worship be more than ritual; may it be obedience from the heart. Amen.