



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

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*"The Last shall be first and the first shall be last." Matt 20:16*

Matthew is the only one of the four gospel writers who tells this parable. And it is a striking one, involving the hearer in a wide range of emotional responses and faith challenges.

Because it is a parable, it is devised by design to be hard on the ear and seemingly unfair, to get the listener's full attention. But, once we reflect on these words of Jesus, we see that the generosity of the master in the story represents the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His outrageous mercy and goodness. Spiritually, we are offered a gift of something so totally out of proportion to what we can offer God that our efforts and human works to earn our way to heaven become meaningless. "An honest wage for an honest day's work" is for mere beasts of burden, but because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are eternal persons, and this analogy is an inadequate way to describe our relationship within the Mystical Body of Christ. Something nearer to Truth is that the Kingdom of God in eternal joy is our gift for patiently waiting for and serving the Master.

We know that Jesus spent a lot of time with society's outcasts, with those who were considered the least and the last. This parable may have been told in response to those who objected to such preference for poor and lowly sinners. Or it may have referred to those who first heard the good news and thought it unfair that latecomers were considered their equal. In any case, the point is clear: Spiritual illumination as we travail the Pilgrim's Way of the Cross toward the New Jerusalem is necessary to free ourselves of our mortal notions of "An honest wage for an honest day's work." All we need do is hear the Master's voice and join the laborers in the vineyard, however young in life or old, and we will enjoy His outrageous mercy and goodness.

It is good to tie this parable to the Gospel of a few short weeks ago: *"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest"* Matthew 9:38. Jesus calls us, his Body on Earth, to carry on His earthly mission.

*May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.  
Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves. Psalm 126:5-6*

All the laborers in their poverty weep in prayer and supplication for the well being of their families. But in their steadfast trust in the Lord's kindness, they gladly take on the satchel containing the "seeds" of faith for sowing in the mission field. As they bundle the harvest in "sheaves" they are rewarded with a cornucopia of abundance, *"some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* Matt 13:8

*Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
answer his call while he is near. Is 145:2*

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.

After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.'

So they went off.

And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise.

Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'

They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.'

He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.'

When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.'

When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage.

So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage.

And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying,

'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.'

He said to one of them in reply,

'My friend, I am not cheating you.

Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?

Take what is yours and go.

What if I wish to give this last one the same as you?

Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money?

Are you envious because I am generous?'

Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

***The Gospel of the Lord***