

THE MERCY & GENEROSITY OF GOD
25th Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 20 September 2020



LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

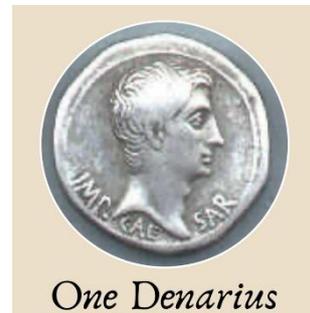
As we begin to listen to the Gospel today,
we pause and pray for all who are unemployed at his time.
We pray for all workers and business owners who are struggling during the Pandemic.

[PAUSE]

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 20:1-16

The parable sets the scene.
The landowner makes an agreement with workers.
A day's work for a day's wage. He is just.

But the employer goes out to the marketplace
and finds workers unemployed and hires them too.
He does this several times.
He makes the effort to go and seek workers.
He has them paid, beginning with the latest.
– one denarius as per agreement



One Denarius

*'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner
who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard.
After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage,
he sent them into his vineyard.
When he went out about nine o'clock,
he saw others standing idle in the market-place;
and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard,
and I will pay you whatever is right."
So they went. When he went out again about noon
and about three o'clock, he did the same.
And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around;
and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?"
They said to him, "Because no one has hired us."
He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard."*

*When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager,
“Call the labourers and give them their pay,
beginning with the last and then going to the first.”
When those hired about five o’clock came,
each of them received the usual daily wage.’*

We note that there is enough work for all.

A major struggle within ourselves can be the issue of mercy.
The next part of the Gospel challenged people 2,000 years ago,
and challenges people today in our understanding of mercy.

The Gospel continues:

*‘Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more;
but each of them also received the usual daily wage.
And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,
saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who
have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.”*

*The original workers expected more than one denarius.
They grumbled. They were “envious”
– the Greek word is the “eye” desiring.
They knew that they all went to the marketplace
so that employers could find them.
At that time, there was no unemployment system,
no safety net, no pension.*

*If they didn’t get work that day, they and their family went hungry.
Yet the first workers grumbled instead of rejoicing.
The First workers became the Last.
They had lost the ability to rejoice in mercy to others.
They were Last because they thought they were special,
more deserving, better because they worked longer.*

*‘But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong;
did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?
Take what belongs to you and go;
I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.
Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?
Or are you envious because I am generous?”
So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’*

EQUALITY

In the early Christian community there were Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Just as the workers received the same wage in the Gospel parable, so, both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus were equal in God's sight.

A new member of our community is equal to a person who has been here fifty years.

One of the challenges of God's mercy, is to ensure that someone who comes later, is respected and valued equally.

What do we need to put in place to ensure that equal respect and opportunity is always found within our community?

Those who arrived later in the market place could have been delayed by a family commitment, or a longer journey, or many other reasons.

They could have tried elsewhere and found no opportunity for work, and finally arrived at the market square of today's Gospel. The mercy of God reaches out to all.

MERCY

We need to strive for Justice in our world. But if we only seek justice, we miss out on the gifts of mercy.

Jesus stresses in today's Gospel the mercy of God.

God knows the circumstances we all face.
God knows the inequalities,
the corruptions in our modern economy,
the plight of the marginalised.

God knows that we can do better,
that we can be more just.
But we also need to be more merciful.

We are created in God's image and likeness.
We are created to be
just and merciful and loving.

Why?
Because God is just and merciful and loving.

When we are not just, merciful and loving,
we dehumanize ourselves.
When we belittle others,
we dehumanize ourselves.
When we think that we are superior to others,

we dehumanize ourselves.
When we exclude people from decision-making,
we dehumanize ourselves.
When we discriminate against others,
we dehumanize ourselves.
When we are not inclusive,
we dehumanize ourselves.

REFLECTIONS ON MERCY

Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel
Jesus said **"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."** 5:7
In Luke's Gospel in the Sermon on the Plain,
Jesus said **"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."** 5:36

AN INVITATION THIS WEEK

Let us reflect on our deep need for God's mercy in our own lives.

In the book *'The Name of God Is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Torielli'*
are **FOUR QUOTES** from Pope Francis that you are invited to ponder this week.

QUOTE 1:

*"Sin is more than a stain. Sin is a wound; it needs to be treated, healed.
The place where my encounter with the mercy of Jesus takes place is my sin."*

QUOTE 2:

*"God forgives not with a decree but with a caress.
Jesus too goes beyond the law and forgives by caressing the wounds of our sins."*

QUOTE 3:

*"There are no situations we cannot get out of,
we are not condemned to sink into quicksand,
in which the more we move the deeper we sink.
Jesus is there, his hand extended, ready to reach out to us
and pull us out of the mud, out of sin,
out of the abyss of evil into which we have fallen.
We need only be conscious of our state,
be honest with ourselves, and not lick our wounds.
We need to ask for the grace to recognize ourselves as sinners.
The more we acknowledge that we are in need,
the more shame and humility we feel,
the sooner we will feel his embrace of grace.
Jesus waits for us, he goes ahead of us, he extends his hand to us,
he is patient with us. God is faithful.
Mercy will always be greater than any sin,
no one can put a limit on the love of the all-forgiving God.
Just by looking at him,
just by raising our eyes from ourselves and our wounds,*

*we leave an opening for the action of his grace.
Jesus performs miracles with our sins, with what we are,
with our nothingness, with our wretchedness.”*

QUOTE 4:

“By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded
and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded,
we put our credibility as Christians on the line.
Let us always remember the words of Saint John of the Cross:
“In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.”

LOVED BY GOD

Loved by God, we want to be forgiven and healed.
Loved by God, we want to act justly, to love mercifully and be humble.
Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092020.cfm>

