



TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME- A

Dear friends,

Most of us have a strong sense of what we're owed. Parents know that their children keep an eagle eye out for who gets what. Parents are probably ready for the cry: "That's not fair." The problem with young people's sense of justice is they have no sense of context, of different needs, or different capacities. Nor do they know the difference between what is owed, and what is simply an unmerited gift.

The gospel of St Matthew today (Matthew 20:1-16), reminds us that our entry and participation in the Kingdom of God is pure gift, nothing, we have merited. No-one objects to God being compassionate and merciful, except, when we feel we don't receive the same generosity from God's hands that others do. This can lead to the capital sin of envy. Envy happens when our equals' success or good fortune, we think is not deserved. We seldom feel aggrieved at the success of a great musician or a great artist. But they're skills are too distant from ours. It is rather those who we consider our equals, those with whom we see ourselves in competition, whose good fortune and success we are most likely to begrudge.

St Thomas Aquinas, probably the greatest Catholic mind of the Medieval era described envy as: 'sorrow at another's good fortune.' Envy eats away at and destroys relationships.

So we turn to the parable Jesus tells today in the gospel of Matthew about the worker's in the vineyard. In one sense they are all equals. The workers who are chosen first, can do a full day's work. The workers who are hired at the sixth, ninth and eleventh hour are either not fit enough or not young enough for a full day's work. The agreement with the landowner for those hired at the beginning of the day is for one denarius. The workers hired at the sixth, ninth and eleventh hour will be paid a fair wage. A denarius, will

feed a family for a day. So without the denarius, a worker's family may go hungry.

So, at the end of the day *all* workers are paid the same amount: one denarius. The workers who have worked a full day, grumble at the land owner. They are envious of the other workers, and feel unjustly treated.

As God is the employer of the vineyard, He is not about rewarding us for our talents and abilities. God, freely gives His grace to all members of the Kingdom, as it is an 'unmerited' gift.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah (Is 55: 6-9), he says: 'let the evil man abandon his ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways.' (Is 6;9). We, are invited to view God's gifts not in a human, materialistic way, but to give thanks for His merciful love so freely and unconditionally shared.

St Augustine said that: '...material gifts run out, but God's mercy never runs out.' Our focus then needs to be on how generous God has been to us, not put ourselves in competition with others vying for His attention.

May the Lord's work in the vineyard, which is His Kingdom, invite us to give praise and thanks to God for His generous and merciful love.

[Fr Kelvin](#)