



Homily – 25th Week in Ordinary Time (A)ⁱ

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Los Angeles, California
September 18, 2011*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

In the Gospel for this week's holy Mass, Jesus gives us another parable of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In our Sunday liturgies during this Church year, as you know, we have been reading the Gospel of Matthew, week-by-week. Where we are now in the Gospel, Jesus is nearing the end of his public ministry.

In this week's reading Jesus is in Judea, beyond the Jordan River. And for these next four Sundays we will hear him teaching the crowds in parables.

The parables are a distinctive feature of Jesus' teaching. The parables are all about the Kingdom of God. The parables are also about us. In a way, they are kind of a mirror. We are meant to see ourselves in the various characters we meet in the parables. And every parable calls us to conversion, to make a choice to live for Christ, to live for his Kingdom.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI tells us that with the parables "we find ourselves in the same situation as Jesus' contemporaries and even his disciples: We need to ask him again and again what he wants to say to us in each of the parables."ⁱⁱ

So let's try today to ask what Jesus is saying to us in this parable of the workers in the vineyard.

In this parable, the landowner stands for Jesus. The laborers are every man and woman. The vineyard is the world in which we are called to build his Kingdom through our work in our various professions and occupations. The "day" is both our personal lifetime and also the "lifetime" of the world, until Jesus Christ comes again. The daily wage that the landowner promises stands for eternal life.

The message of this parable, then, is beautiful and challenging.

Our Lord is telling us today that he has called each one of us, personally, to the work of growing his Kingdom on earth.

He sends each one of us out into his vineyard and gives us a mission. The mission of his Church — going out into all the world to preach his Gospel; proclaiming forgiveness of sins in his name; teaching people to live by all that Jesus commanded.

Notice in the parable that Jesus keeps coming back to look for more workers. All day long — throughout history, at various times in people's lives, in every time and place — Jesus is seeking souls for his Kingdom.

We hear in a special way today the sadness in the voices of those he finds standing idle in the marketplace.

When they say to him: “No one has hired us,” we think of all of our brothers and sisters who are out of work and need a job. So let's remember them today and commit ourselves to helping them with the love of Christ.

The point of the parable is that Jesus calls everyone. And as long as we live, it is never too late for us. Even in the midnight hour of our life, we are able to turn and find his mercy.

This leads to the tension in the parable. At the end, those who have been working all day grumble to the landowner because he gives them the same wage as those who came to work much later in the day. They say it's not fair.

But my brothers and sisters, who are we to complain about the generosity of God? This is another lesson for us today in our readings.

God's ways are not our ways, the prophet Isaiah tells us in the first reading. God is so much more generous, so much more merciful than we could ever imagine. His love, his grace — is pure gift.

In the light of this parable, we can reflect on our own work in his vineyard. Are there things we can be doing to be more to be fruitful, to sow the seeds of his Kingdom, to spread the good news of his love?

We all face obstacles in our work to share the Gospel. But we should never give in to pessimism or sadness. We need to bear the burdens of our days cheerfully, trusting in his promises, relying on his graces.

St. Paul says today in our second reading: “For me, to live is Christ.” Let's try to live in “fruitful labor” for his Kingdom. Let's try to make little improvements this week — finding a little more time to pray, personally and with our families. Maybe we can try to get to daily Mass once or twice during the week.

Today at our Cathedral Parish we have a 2nd Collection to support our Outreach Program, Deacon Gus will talk to us later on and we are also starting the immediate preparation for the new translations of some of the prayers of the Mass that we will start using on the 1st Sunday of Advent, November 27.

I have written 4 columns in The Tidings about it and we'll continue talking about it in the coming months. You can find the columns in The Tidings webpage and I'll ask Msgr. Kostelnik if we can post them in the Cathedral's webpage too.

So we have some practical things that we can do these coming weeks to continue joyfully "working" in the vineyard of the Lord!

Finally this week, we learned the joyous news that there will soon be a new blessed in the Church who once lived here in Los Angeles.

We rejoice today with our own Poor Clare Missionary Sisters, that their foundress Mother María Inés Teresa Arias will be beatified next April 21 in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

She came here as a refugee during the religious persecutions in Mexico, and on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, 1930, she received a special missionary calling from Our Lady while praying at what was then our Church of St. Toribio.

Mother María Inés Teresa said something very beautiful about our duty to spread the Gospel in everything we do.

She said: "Joy in our daily Mass, our adoration and meditation, in our daily apostolate, in any type of work we do — in all the actions of our daily lives. While we eat and sleep, as well as when we rest. We need to be missionaries by every breath, by every palpitation of our hearts, minute by minute of our lives."ⁱⁱⁱ

So today, let's ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to help us to be missionaries, to labor more fruitfully in the vineyard of her Son. Let us pray to make the Kingdom of Heaven a reality in our life and in the life of the Church and our society.

ⁱ Readings: Isa. 55:6–9; Ps. 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18; Phil. 1:20–24, 27; Matt. 20:1–16.

ⁱⁱ *Jesus of Nazareth* 1:183; *Catechism*, 546.

ⁱⁱⁱ www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010209_arias_en.html.