

SUNDAY 25 (A) (2020)

A) INTRODUCTION: ALIX

- I'm reminded of a non-Catholic lady in a previous parish who was married to a Catholic, came to Mass with him every single Sunday and brought up all her children as Catholics
- But she could never quite bring herself to make that final step and become a catholic herself...until the last minute
- She developed cancer, found herself in hospital, knew that she was dying and asked to be received into the church
- And she was received straightaway, without the usual extended preparation and ceremonies
- Her family of course were delighted, but teased her because, they said, she had got in, the easy way

B) LAND-OWNER

- we may feel that the land-owner in today's Gospel is acting unjustly
- we may think that the workers who had toiled away all day long had reason to complain:
- the last-comers, after all, had only worked an hour, and in the cool of the evening
- and yet they were being paid the same as those who had done a full day's work in difficult conditions
- surely those who have worked longer should be paid more
- it also seems as though the land-owner is being deliberately provocative:
- he arranges for the first-comers to be paid last;
- they would see what everyone else was being paid
- they could reasonably expect some kind of bonus
- but they don't get it
- and yet the landowner is quite justified in saying that he has not broken any agreement
- the problem for the long-time workers is not that the landowner has been ungenerous to them, but that he has been so generous to others.

C) WHAT IS THE POINT JESUS MAKES?

- perhaps Jesus was telling the parable to prepare his disciples for the time when non-Jews would become Christians.
- The workers in the vine-yard who had toiled all day long were the Jewish people, who would (with a few exceptions) reject Jesus as the Messiah.
- Those who went to the vineyard at the eleventh hour (in other words, at the last moment) would be the Gentile converts
- they would be offered the Good News after it had been spurned by the Jewish people.
- But all the members of the new community of believers, whether Jew or Gentile, would be treated the same.

- Each one would be benefiting equally from the goodness and mercy and generosity of God.

D) WHY BE ENVIOUS BECAUSE I AM GENEROUS

- It is so easy to be envious of the good fortune of others
- Why does God distribute his gifts in the way he does?
- Why is it that other people seem to get all the luck?
- For me, the best remedy for that kind of envy is to count my blessings:
 - to list all the gifts that God has given to me, beginning with my very existence;
 - to think of my share of natural qualities, and supernatural gifts;
 - to think too of the story of my life, and of all those people and events which have helped to shape it.

E) GOD'S MERCY CANNOT BE EARNED

- but the most important lesson for us all is that God's mercy cannot be earned
- it is true that "God created us without our help, but he will not save us without our consent"
- we have to co-operate with his grace
- we have to respond to his invitations
- we have to struggle continually to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel
- but every step we take, every victory we win, is only possible with his grace
- freely given and never deserved
- we cannot earn it, we cannot merit it, it is not ours by right
- we can only accept it from him with humility and gratitude

F) CONCLUSION

- When we listen to this parable of the workmen in the vineyard, there may be days when we feel annoyed that God should be so generous:
 - How did those people receive such mercy?
 - But there will be days when we feel truly comforted.
 - How did we receive such mercy, latecomers that we are, every one of us?

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