

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES

Reflection for

Twenty-Fifth Sunday (A), September 20, 2020

(May be used for Home Prayer Service)

Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

THE GENEROSITY OF GOD AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF HIS SALVATION

The parable of the landowner and the labourers touches on the infinite generosity of God. This generosity is the salvation which God has made accessible to everyone. Accordingly, we all are products of God's generosity and so we should rejoice with others when they also partake of God's generosity.

God's Call of the People of Israel: In Abraham, God called the People of Israel to be his own and he made an eternal covenant with them (Gen 12; Jer 32:38). In salvation history, they were the first to be called by God into his vineyard. They were the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16). Later, God also called Gentiles into his vineyard and has included them in salvation history. Thus, the kingdom of God is not the exclusive right of a specific nation but God's gift to the whole human race.

Eternal Life is God's Gift to All: Jesus told the parable of the landowner and labourers to address the feeling of superiority which some Jews had towards others. In the Christian community of Matthew, some Jews felt that they were more acceptable to God than non-Jews who shared the same Christian faith with them. Matthew then used this parable to teach his community that regardless of the time of their conversion, they would all be rewarded with the generous and equal gift of eternal life.

The Universal Call of God: Likewise, the parable speaks to those who think that the service of God has been exclusively entrusted to them. For a long time, the Jews were puffed up with the feeling that Yahweh was exclusively theirs. To correct this wrong feeling, God reminded them through the Prophet Isaiah in our First Reading (Is 55:6-9) that unlike them, he is not exclusive in his call to salvation. God calls everyone and at different times to his Church and ultimately into his kingdom of love, happiness, and peace. As instructed by Christ (Mt 28:19), the Good News of the kingdom of God has been preached to many other nations

who have gladly accepted the invitation. The Church which proclaims the same Good News to all people then becomes the means of unity to our world. In the Church, all peoples become one in Christ (Eph 2:14-16).

Cradle Catholics and Catholic Converts: In the parable, Jesus mentioned that the landowner invited people to work in his vineyard at different times of the day. At the end of the day, those who worked for twelve, nine, six, three and one hour all received the same wage. In our present Christian community, we have people who were born into Catholic homes and have been practising Catholics since childhood. By birth, they became Catholics in the 'mornings' of their lives. This set could be referred to as cradle Catholics. There are also those who became Catholics in the 'afternoons' and 'evenings' of their lives. The 'afternoon' signifies those who answered God's call in their youth. The 'evening' refers to those who received baptism in their older years. These may be referred to as Catholic converts. The lesson is then that both cradle Catholics and catholic converts who live according to the commandment of love will receive eternal life as their reward. To God, it is not the amount of time we spend working in his kingdom that matters. What matters is our willing response to this call and the dedication with which we serve him.

God is Just in His Generosity: God is the owner of the vineyard who deals justly with what he owns. He is not unjust to anyone as he pays each one what he promised them. The generosity of God as taught in the parable points to the fact that salvation is not a prize we earn but a gift which is freely given by God. If this is the case, no one should be upset when God gives this gift to those he loves (1 Tim 2:4). Similarly, that the landowner gave the same wage to all the labourers also signifies that, as humans, we are equal in our human dignity. Indeed, everyone deserves a chance to life, happiness, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rm 14:17). May we come to share in the eternal life of God. Amen.