

Wednesday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 20,1-16): Jesus said to his disciples, «This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven. A landowner went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the workers a salary of a silver coin for the day, and sent them to his vineyard. He went out again at about nine in the morning, and seeing others idle in the square, he said to them: ‘You, too, go to my vineyard and I will pay you what is just’. So they went. The owner went out at midday and again at three in the afternoon, and he did the same. Finally he went out at the last working hour—it was the eleventh—and he saw others standing there. So he said to them: ‘Why do you stay idle the whole day?’ They answered: ‘Because no one has hired us’. The master said: ‘Go and work in my vineyard’.

»When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager: ‘Call the workers and pay them their wage, beginning with the last and ending with the first’. Those who had come to work at the eleventh hour turned up and were given a denarius each (a silver coin). When it was the turn of the first, they thought they would receive more. But they, too, received a denarius each. So, on receiving it, they began to grumble against the landowner. They said: ‘These last hardly worked an hour, yet you have treated them the same as us who have endured the day’s burden and heat’. The owner said to one of them: ‘Friend, I have not been unjust to you. Did we not agree on a denarius a day? So take what is yours and go. I want to give to the last the same as I give to you. Don't I have the right to do as I please with my money? Why are you envious when I am kind?’. So will it be: the last will be first, the first will

be last».

«The last will be first, the first will be last»

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Today, God's Word invites us to realize that divine “logic” goes beyond merely human logic. While we, men, calculate («they thought they would receive more»: Mt 20:10), God—who is a dear Father too—, simply loves («Why are you envious when I am kind?»: Mt 20:15). And the measure of love is to have no measure: «I love because I love, I love to love» (St. Bernard).

However, this does not mean justice is pointless: «I will pay you what is just» (Mt 20:4). God is not arbitrary and He wants to treat us as intelligent sons: it is, therefore, logic He makes “deals” with us. In fact, some other times, the Lord's teachings clearly state that who has received more will also be demanded more (let us remember the Parable of the Talents). In short, God is just, but charity does not conflict with justice; it rather goes beyond (cf. 1Cor 13:5).

A popular saying asserts that «justice per se is the worst injustice». Luckily for us, God's justice—let us repeat it again— exceeds our schemes. If it would be a matter of mere and strict justice, we would still be pending redemption. What is even more, we would not have any hope of redemption. In strict justice, we should not deserve any redemption: we would simply remain disowned of what we were given in the moment of Creation and we rejected with the original sin. So, when we have to deal with others let us examine ourselves, to find out how are we doing regarding judgments, comparisons and estimations.

Furthermore, if we are talking about saintliness, we have to start from the basis that all is grace. The most evident sample is the case of Dismas, the good thief. Not only, the possibility of being deserving before God is also a grace (something that is freely given to us). God is the master, our «landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard» (Mt 20:1). The vineyard (that is, life, heaven...) is his; we are just invited there and not just in any way: it is a privilege to be able to work there and be eventually “rewarded” with heaven.