

Wednesday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 20:1-16): Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The Kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o’clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’”

When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’ Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

“The last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(*Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain*)

Today, God's Word invites us to realize that divine “logic” goes beyond mere human logic. While we, men, calculate (“they thought that they would receive more” (Mt 20:10)), God—who is a dear Father too—, simply loves (“Are you envious because I am generous?” (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 give you what is just” (Mt 20:4). God is not arbitrary and He wants to treat us as intelligent sons: it is, therefore, logical He makes “deals” with us. In fact, at 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 of 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 we are 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 example is the case of Dismas, the good thief. Even more, the possibility of meriting God's attention is also a grace (something that is freely given to us). God is the master, our “landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers 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.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

-

“The Lord called them all when they were ready to obey, which he did with the good thief, whom the Lord called when he saw that he would obey. The Savior did not exclude anyone» (Saint John Chrysostom)

-

“This parable was not transmitted for workers of another time, but for us, who take for granted that "spiritual unemployment" —a life without faith and prayer— is more pleasant than spiritual service” (Benedict XVI)

-

“Man is himself the author, center, and goal of all economic and social life. the decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2,459)