Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 20:1-16a): 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, the landowner 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, the landowner 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."

"Are you envious because I am generous?"

Fr. Jaume GONZÁLEZ i Padrós
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the evangelist Matthew continues to describe the Kingdom of God according to Jesus' teaching, as proclaimed during these summer Sundays in our Eucharistic assemblies.

At the heart of today's story is the vineyard, a prophetic image of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and now of the new people of God born from the wounded side of the Lord on the cross. The matter at hand: belonging to this people, which is granted by a personal call made to each one: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you” (Jn 15:16) —and by the will of the Father in heaven, who desires to extend this call to everyone, in accordance with His generous will for the salvation of all people.

What stands out in this parable is the protest of the early-hour workers. They parallel the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. They experience their work for the Kingdom of God (the work in the vineyard) as a heavy burden (“we bore the day's burden and the heat” Mt 20:12) and not as a privilege bestowed by God; they don't work out of joyful sonship, but with the grumpiness of servants.

For them, faith is something that binds and enslaves, and they quietly envy those who "live life" to the fullest, for they see Christian conscience as a restraint, not as wings that give divine flight to human life. They believe it's better to remain spiritually idle than to live in the light of God's word. They feel that salvation is their due and are jealous of it. Their petty spirit contrasts sharply with the generosity of the Father, “who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), and thus He calls to His vineyard: “The Lord is good to all, compassionate toward all your works” (Ps 145:9).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Let us run, let us press on; we are on the way. The blissful security of things past should not make us less diligent for those which we have yet to attain” (St. Augustine)

- “Dialogue is our method, not as a shrewd strategy but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace, even at the eleventh hour, to propose his offer of love” (Francis)

- “Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 2445)