

## 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." So they went.

At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too."

In the evening the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last," they said, "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.'

(Matthew 20:1-16)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In the Greco-Roman world, casual labourers used to gather in the *agora* or town-square waiting for employers to hire them.
- In the early church, those who had believed in the risen Christ from the earliest days—and had thus suffered persecution for their faith—were sometimes jealous of those, especially Gentiles, who came to belief later on.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This gospel offers yet another challenge to human ideas about what is just and reveals the generosity of God. The Master makes a point of having those who came last paid first. One must imagine the queue, with the newly arrived workers at the head and those tired from a full day's labour watching as the late-comers are paid in full. In many ways, the audience is drawn into sharing their disappointment and indignation. If those employed early had been at the head of the queue, they would have gone off happy with their contracted wage. The problem arises only when they see the latecomers reaping the same reward.

This alludes to a problem that has arisen in Matthew's community. Those Jewish Christians who have risked all and believed from the beginning are now seeing the newcomers to faith being offered the same reward. Jesus' answer is simple: the kingdom is God's. God can do as he likes, and what God chooses is to welcome all and offer reward to all who come to belief, no matter at what stage.

- Are there examples in our world of people being generously rewarded when some may feel that they do not deserve such generosity?
- You could discuss this concept in terms of the candidates coming to belief later than those baptised as babies.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you sometimes experience jealousy or resentment? What causes this response? How does it make you feel?
- Imagine the feelings of the workers who arrived last when they were paid for a full day's work. What might they say of the generosity of God?
- Share together a time when you have experienced overwhelming generosity.
- Is there a difference in how we react if we are the recipients of generosity compared with our reaction when we see others being treated with generosity that we believe they do not deserve? Do we live in a generous society?
- Look for occasions this week to be generous, not only with money, but with time, attention and attitude. Challenge those who lack generosity of spirit. Pray this psalm often this week.

*The Lord is kind and full of compassion,  
slow to anger,  
abounding in love.  
How good is the Lord to all,  
compassionate to all his creatures.*

