

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON
I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord.
Should they cry to me in any distress,
I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

GLORIA
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT
O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law
upon love of you and of our neighbour,
grant that, by keeping your precepts,
we may merit to attain eternal life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Is 55:6-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
Seek the Lord while he is still to be found,
call to him while he is still near.
Let the wicked man abandon his way,
the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him,
to our God who is rich in forgiving;
for my thoughts are not your thoughts,
my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks.
Yes, the heavens are as high above earth
as my ways are above your ways,
my thoughts above your thoughts.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Ps 144:2-3,8-9,17-18

Response:
The Lord is close to all who call him.

1. I will bless you day after day
and praise your name for ever.
The Lord is great, highly to be praised,
his greatness cannot be measured. (R.)

2. 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. (R.)

3. The Lord is just in all his ways
and loving in all his deeds.
He is close to all who call him,
who call on him from their hearts. (R.)

SECOND READING Phil 1:20-24,27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians
Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results – I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake.
Avoid anything in your everyday lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessings on the King who comes,
in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest heavens!
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mt 20:1-16

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
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.'
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH
I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS
Receive with favour, O Lord, we pray,
the offerings of your people,
that what they profess with devotion and faith
may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

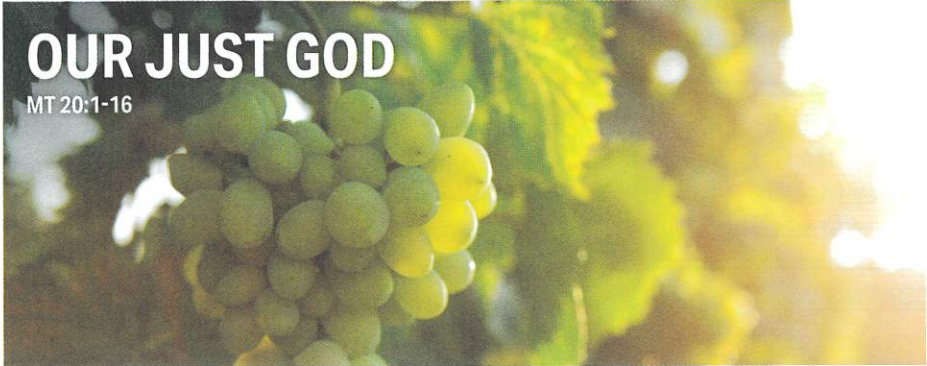
COMMUNION ANTIPHON
You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept;
may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION
Graciously raise up, O Lord,
those you renew with this Sacrament,
that we may come to possess your redemption
both in mystery and in the manner of our life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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We thank you Father for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. As this bread which we have broken was once scattered on the hillside and was gathered and became one again, so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(The Didache 2nd century)

Sunday Message

THE WORD



OUR JUST GOD

MT 20:1-16

The landowner in today's Gospel story probably needs extra labour to get the grape harvest in. It may reflect something of the economy of Palestine in Jesus' time.

Small family farms had often given way to large holdings, forcing landless workers to hire themselves out for a day's work when they could get it (something that still happens today). They probably congregated in the marketplace or village square at dawn, hoping to be hired for the day. A day's work meant a family could be fed; otherwise, the outlook was bleak.

The landowner goes out to hire five times in the day – at daybreak, the usual time for starting work; mid-morning ('third hour'); noon ('sixth hour'); mid-afternoon ('ninth hour'); and just an hour before sunset ('the eleventh hour'), the end of the working day. The only conversation recorded is with the first and the last groups. To the first, he promises a 'fair wage' (a denarius). With the last group, he doesn't mention a precise wage.

The parable has a surprising ending. It would have been normal to begin by paying those who were hired first. Instead, the landowner tells the foreman to start from the end. Probably to their immense surprise, those hired last are given an entire day's wage. Word probably passed back along the line so that those who had been there since dawn were expecting to receive more. To their disappointment, they got the denarius they had agreed on, even though, as they argued, they had been slaving all day in the heat. The landowner reminds them of their bargain: a denarius for a day's work. He is not being unjust, but why, he asks, should they be jealous if he has chosen to be generous? ■

REFLECT

Some people don't like the parable of the Good Employer. It seems unfair, even unjust, that those who had worked since dawn were paid the same amount as those who had worked for only a few hours or less. But the employer isn't being unfair. He has cheated nobody. He has paid them what they were entitled to and what they agreed on – a just wage. Instead, the employer is compassionate. He pays the latecomers a full day's wages because he takes pity on them. He doesn't want them to go hungry. He doesn't want their loved ones to suffer. He wants them to be able to feed their families tomorrow. He knows he's unlikely to become a billionaire if he pays people a day's wages for an hour's work – but he does it anyway. His sense of justice demands that he do it.

Today's Gospel reminds us of God's justice. At the heart of the Old Testament is God's covenant with the people of Israel. God promised them that, if they stuck by him,

he would never abandon them, he would be forever committed to them. God would always lavish his love on them, no matter how often they let God down.

This covenant formed the template for how the people of Israel should live. They were to treat each other with justice because that was the way God had treated them. They were to stand alongside the oppressed because God had stood alongside them when they were oppressed in Egypt. They were to care for the weakest in society, the widow and orphan, because God had cared for them in their distress. By being compassionate, they were simply mirroring God's compassion for them.

Jesus epitomised God's justice. He stood alongside the poor. He identified with the most marginal. He said they would be first in the kingdom of heaven. Justice and compassion informed everything Jesus said and did, and he said it must be the

DO

Look at your life at home and at work. Do you treat others always with justice, compassion and love?

SAY

"Lord, help me to see and treat others the way you see and treat them. Amen."

PRAY

We are aware of the appalling conditions in which many children and vulnerable adults throughout the world are forced to work. Pray for them today, and for a more just world.



LEARN

God's justice is ruled by generosity and compassion

All are equal in the eyes of God

same with us. We must all have a heart for the weak and oppressed; we must all have a passion for justice.

That's why it's important to make a distinction between charity and justice. I can contribute to charity even if I'm not interested in the causes of poverty and injustice. I can feed the poor without asking why they're hungry. I can pray for asylum seekers without wondering how they ended up in this terrible situation. To imitate God's justice demands more of me than simple charity.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops in Rome declared that action for justice is a constitutive part of the Gospel. It's central to the Gospel, not an addendum to it. Simply being charitable isn't enough to save my conscience. I must not be content to live in a world where there is a yawning gap between the 'have yachts' and the great many 'have nots.' ■