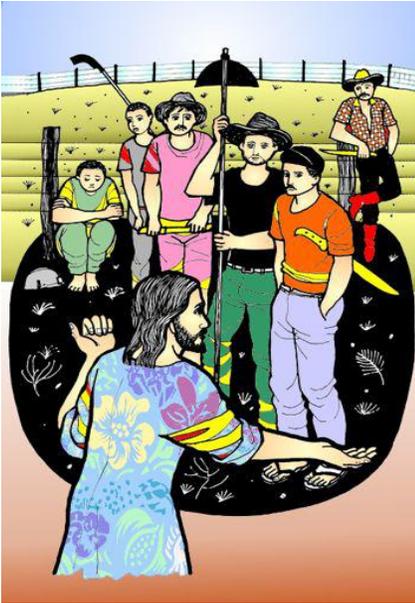


## Lectionary Faith Sharing Circle 25TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Year A - September 20, 2020



### OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *The Lord is near to all who call upon him.*

All: *Every day I will bless you, and I will praise your name for ever and ever.*

Leader: *The Lord is good to all and compassionate to all his creatures.*

All: *The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.*

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Though Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### First Reading [ Isaiah 55 (6-9) ]

***Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near.***

***Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts;***

***let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.***

***For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.***

***As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.***

### Commentaries

The book of Isaiah has three sections. The second, which begins in chapter 40, closes with chapter 55, from which the passage for this first reading has been taken. We note the tone of joyful hope. God prepares his people for a splendid banquet, after a painful exile in Babylon. Although the Israelites have been unfaithful to the covenant, God maintains their faithfulness and generous love and offers them another everlasting covenant.

This is how we understand the offer of God that the prophet conveys for us. It is necessary to remake the path that leads to God, abandoning evil, seeking the Lord, converting to Him and seeking his forgiveness. As humans we do not understand how God can forgive so much. So the text reviews what was said on a recent Sunday: God's thoughts are far beyond our capabilities, God's thoughts do not fit in our head.

### Reflection

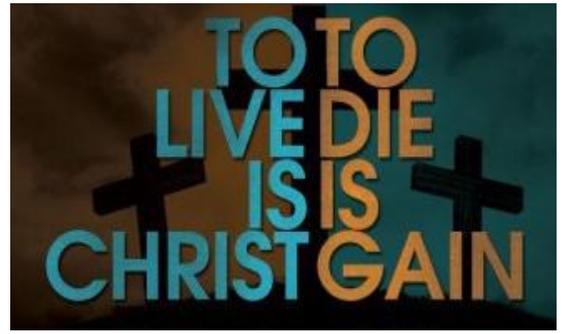
- (1) Try to identify moments throughout a day when it is easier to communicate with God than with another person.
- (2) What could help us to "seek the Lord" (and finding him) in all areas of our life?
- (3) After the Last Supper, Jesus was betrayed by two apostles: Judas, who sold him and Peter, who denied him. What is the difference of the end between these two men? Did they understand in the same way God's mercy?
- (4) When a person performs a misconduct and is comes before an authority to confessing, what do they get? And what do you get if you go before God to confess some wrongdoing?

## Second Reading [ Philippians 1 (20-24), (27) ]

### **Brothers and sisters:**

**Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.**

**And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit. Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.**



### Commentaries

The Christians in Philippi had a special place in Paul's heart, which is why his letter, written perhaps from prison, has an intimate tone that is only used with the dearest people. Because he is in prison, he walks around the idea of an early death, which does not give him fear at all, but on the contrary sees it as every Christian should do: as the necessary step to begin to enjoy the beatific vision of God. So he calls it "gain."

On the other hand, he also wants to have a longer life, but not to indulge himself, but to have more time to fulfill a mission that he considers incomplete while there are people who have not yet converted to Jesus Christ. When Christ is at the center of a person's heart, as it was in the case of Paul, everything, including death, is secondary compared to Christ.

### Reflection

- (1) Have you been lucky enough to meet people who have shown you the face of Christ? Is there anything you can imitate from those people?
- (2) We have always heard that a person "has been blessed with a long life." What is better, a long life in this world or an earlier start in life in the other world?
- (3) Paul is torn between two desires: to end his life soon to meet the Lord, or to continue living many more years but to continue working for the Lord. Argue.
- (4) A life can be fruitful, if we dedicate ourselves to producing fruits. What do you think a fruitful life consists of?
- (5) Suppose you already participate in a ministry in the Church, such as being an altar server, usher, reader or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Do you think that this is an activity that contributes to the growth of the Kingdom of God? Would it be necessary to do something else?

## Gospel [ Matthew 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, 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."**

### **Commentaries**

This parable is unique to the Gospel according to Matthew: We do not find it anywhere else in the Bible. Like all parables, Jesus composes a story, which people will remember much better, and which serves as an instrument, usually for a single teaching. Sometimes we fall into the temptation to analyze the parables, to see how many teachings we manage to extract. But Jesus Christ was much simpler: For an idea, a parable.

In this parable Jesus wants to illustrate not the award that will be received for working in the Vineyard of the Lord, but the immense goodness of God who has the same mercy with those who came last. The teaching is, therefore, in the last words of the text.

This does not mean that if we have already been called by the Lord to collaborate with Him, we can afford to leave our answer for later, because at the end of the day we will receive the same award as those who are already striving. It is not a question of this, but of showing us once more what was reflected in the first reading: Our ways of judging are not similar to those of God, because his thoughts do not fit in our head.

### **Reflection**

- (1) How do you think God's Grace would be administered if men had laid down the rules? Do you recognize or remember facts in which men have placed obstacles in the administration of Grace?
- (2) What caught your attention the most: That everyone received the same pay, or that the Lord's goodness is also manifested to those who came last?
- (3) Has the Lord invited you to work in his vineyard once or several times? Did you answer the call the first time? At what point in your life did you decide to work for the Lord? or if you have not already done so, what is the greatest obstacle that prevents you from collaborating with the Lord?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father .....

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

Deacon José Moronta      DeaconJMoronta@stmarktampa.org

