

## 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- In our Gospel this week...the theme of fairness stands out.
  - We certainly see it in the controversy...about a just wage...
    - and taking it to a spiritual level...
      - we're also dealing with fairness...
      - when it comes to God's grace...and how He chooses to give it out.
    - Here we quickly see that God's ways are not ours.
  - Of course this all speaks about the Jews and the Gentiles.
    - Despite coming late to the party...the Gentiles receive the exact same grace.
  - And the reaction to that...
    - doesn't it remind you...of the Elder Brother...
      - in the story of the Prodigal Son?
    - Instead of cheering on...the Giver of grace...
      - and being overjoyed...for the ones receiving it...
      - they're only worried...about themselves.
- In the end...Jesus is reminding us...
  - that even those who reach out to Him...on their deathbed...
  - they can still receive...the exact same gift of eternal life...as anyone else.
    - And that's something to rejoice in!
- But what stood out for me...was the very first line of our first reading
  - *"Seek the LORD...while he may be found...call [on] him...while he is near."*
  - There's great comfort in that line...and in the lines that follow.
    - Grace and mercy are there for the taking...all we have to do is ask.
  - But there's also a sense of urgency...
    - *"call [on] him while he is near."*
  - And that begs the question...where's He going?
    - I mean God is everywhere.
      - There is no place that He cannot be found.
      - So why the need to *"call [on] Him while He is near"*?
  - Well of course God isn't going anywhere...but for us...there is a change.
  - You see...when it comes to God's mercy...there's no limit...we cannot drain it...nor reach the bottom of its depths...but it does have a season.
    - It comes...it goes...and it's gone.
    - The *'nearness'* of it...that's what lasts...only for a time.
  - So we've got to take advantage it...while we still can.
- And that season of mercy...it was very short in the early Church.
  - Once you came to the Lord...during the first few hundred years...
    - once you converted and baptized...
    - then the season for God's mercy...was all but over for you.
  - Back then...confession was more of a once-in-a-lifetime thing.
  - After you were baptized...you had one, maybe two more chances...to get to confession and to get your life back on track - *that was it.*

- Sins were still confessed in secret...as they are today,
  - but before absolution...
  - they had to do months...even years...of very public penance...
    - things like...barefoot pilgrimages to holy sites...
    - or dressing in sackcloth and begging others to pray for you.
  - So given the time and the effort involved...
    - you can see why people only went once or twice in a lifetime.
- And this way of receiving the Lord's mercy...it created an interesting problem.
  - Because of the work involved...it was common for people to put off their baptism
    - to put off the grace of that sacrament...
    - because they only had a small chance to get things right before they died.
  - And you can imagine what happened...
    - people died before their baptism.
    - They died before receiving God's grace - And that's not good!
  - What was good about this practice...
    - is that people had a true sense of sin...as well as the need for repentance.
    - But what it lacked...was acknowledging the true depths of God's mercy.
- A great change came from two things:
  - One was the practice of infant baptism.
    - Once a majority of the adults converted...baptism was mainly for them.
  - The other thing that changed was confession itself
    - it became more streamlined...
      - penances were much more simple and private.
    - So people took advantage much more often.
  - And as a result...the season for God's mercy was extended over an entire lifetime
- But, honestly...for most people now...that season is once again very short.
  - Very few people will put off baptism...
    - but confession...that's something that can wait.
    - And we're running into the same problem as the early Church.
      - people are dying in their sin...dying without the Lord's grace
      - and that's not good!
    - We've also lost our true sense of sin...and our need for repentance...
      - even for fairly obvious things...like Keeping the Lord's Day Holy.
      - which...outside of pandemic...means coming to Mass.
- My brothers and sisters...God's mercy is available now...
  - and there is no sin that you can commit...
  - no amount of sin that you can commit...
  - that is bigger than the Mercy and Love of Jesus Christ.
- But... now is the time...this is the season...
  - because here in this life...it's the only chance we get...
  - And do any of us really know how much longer we have?
  - So *"seek the Lord while He may be found...call [on] him while He is near."*