



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

**September 20, 2020**

**Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

In all areas of life, but especially in a work situation it is easy to look at someone who has the higher position than you do and say, “It’s unfair. They are no smarter than I am. My work is as good as hers. So, why does she get the bigger office and the higher salary?” The same perspective applies in relationships. We can say, “It’s not fair. I love my friends as much as he does, perhaps even more.

Then why is it that they choose to be with him and accept me only in second place?” It applies in families. We can say, “I love my children as much as those people love their children. I spend as much time with my children as they do. Then why is it that their children are brighter, better behaved, make friends easier, make wise decisions over foolish ones?”

Life is unfair. All of us know of stories about families that have never been able to recover after reading their loved ones’ will. Either they all received the same when some persons expected to receive more, or some persons received more when others thought they should receive the same or less.

Life does not always fall into categories that we think are just. We perceive such injustice immediately. It is the first thing we notice. Just listen to the workers who were hired first in today’s parable. They say to the landowner, “These last have worked only one hour and yet you have chosen to make them equal to us who have borne the work of the day and the scorching heat.” These workers immediately recognize the unfairness of the situation.

But today’s parable is not about what the worker sees but what they do not see. What they do not see is the generosity of the landowner. More specifically, they do not see the generosity of the landowner to them. They recognize that the landowner has chosen to be generous to those who were hired last, and they resent it. But they do not recognize how they have been given a job, a day’s labor, by which they can support their families. You see, today’s parable is about blindness, the blindness that so many of us have to the blessings of God in our life. The parable warns us that we will never be able to see God’s generosity to us as long as we look with jealous eyes.

The parable is realistic. It accepts the world as it is. It recognizes that things are unfair and there is not that much we can do about it. The parable does not give us some magic formula which would allow us to give each person what is deserved. But what the parable provides is a way—a way in which we can be happy even in a world where some receive more than others. The parable tells us that if we are to be happy in an unfair world, we must focus less on what others have and more on the generosity that God has shown to us.

Yes, we may not have the biggest office or the highest salary, but we do have a job, a job by which we can earn a decent living. We may not be the most popular person in our school or on our street, but we do have friends and those friends are real. Our children may not be the brightest or the smartest, but they are healthy, and we have a good relationship with them. Others in our family may receive more from our parents, but we have parents and they have given us life.

In an unfair world, jealousy can consume us. If we compare ourselves to others, that comparison can make us blind to the blessings that we have received. The gospel reminds us that our blessings are real, and it is only by embracing them that we will be able to find happiness regardless of how much more others seem to be given.