

Homily for 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, A
September 20, 2020
16th Sunday after Pentecost
by Fr. Valentin Iurochkin

Matthew 20:1-16.

Last week the Church was inviting us to meditate about forgiveness and compassion as our response to those who condemn us. We spoke about the unlimited vengeance in a line a Cain who, after been sent away from the face of God, received a promise that his life will be avenged sevenfold. We have been told that the last of the descendants of Cain was called Lameck, who boasted saying: "If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Lameck seventy-seven-fold". We are told that as the line of Caine was marked by limitless vengeance, the life of every Christian has to bear a mark of the endless forgiveness.

Today the Church presents to us an image of the laborers called to work in the vineyard. St. Gregory the Great was explaining that these laborers can perfectly represent all the created people from first man Adam to the last man(1) and at the same time this parable is an image of God who calls each one of us to the holiness of life from our birth till the dawn of our lives, since the early morning till the late evening(2).

In the beginning of the parable the master of the vineyard is inviting the laborers to work in his vineyard promising a denarius per day. Yet none of those who were invited afterward were told regarding a payment. Why did the Master of a vineyard say nothing regarding the promise payment to those who were invited the last? We find in the Gospel that he is just saying: "*What is right I will give you*".

The holy Fathers explained that *the Lord, knowing that Adam would fall and that all should perish in the deluge, made a condition for him, that he should never say that he therefore neglected righteousness, because he knew not what reward he should have (Adam perfectly knew the reward that was expecting him..)*... but with the rest of us, he didn't make a contract, seeing that he prepared to give

more than the laborers could hope for. We read in the book of Deuteronomy: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, so that you and your descendants may live, and that you may love the LORD your God, obey Him, and hold fast to Him. For He is your life, and He will prolong your life in the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Deut 30: 19-20).

That is why on hearing the words of the master of a vineyard: *"What is right I will give you,"* we have to say that the Lord places the choice before us daily. Each one of us is called to choose Him from the dawn of the day until the late evening and to do what is right before Him. Our Lord has promised a great reward for those who love Him, and in his mercy up to this very moment He is calling us to serve Him. St. John Mary Vianney said: *"It is never too late to start striving for holiness in spite of our age and abilities."*

I want to finish with a story about a meeting between St. John Mary Vianney and a boastful hunter with his beautiful spaniel. The hunter out of curiosity decided to visit a small village, Ars, in order to see the holy priest. Now at his arrival, St. John Mary Vianney just finished the confessions and was heading toward the rectory. At that time, he was in a very advanced age. Crossing the small square that was separating the church and the rectory, St. John Mary Vianney saw the hunter and his dog. The saint said: *"You have a very beautiful dog."* The proud hunter started to boast about the beauty of his spaniel. Seeing this, St. John Mary Vianney said sadly: *"I wish your soul were as beautiful as your dog"*. This meeting forever changed the life of the hunter. It is said he became a monk renowned for the holiness of his life.

Mother Angelica once said: *"We cannot hide under the cozy excuse of not been chosen or not possessing special qualities. If we are Christians, we have been chosen"*.

Let us ask in this Holy Mass through the intercession of our Lady that each one of us may never get tired to strive for holiness and may bear fruit in perseverance.