

From the Pastor

Today begins our Parish Mission. Please give a warm welcome to Father Jim Marchionda who will lead us in prayer and preaching. Father Marchionda will say all of the weekend Masses, and then begin the Mission Sunday evening at 7:30pm. The mission will continue Monday and Tuesday evenings with a light social following on Tuesday. Father will also say the morning mass on Monday and Tuesday. All are welcome and invited to attend each of the sessions. A collection will be taken on Monday evening to help defray the cost of the Mission. We will pass the basket again on Tuesday for those who may have missed the opportunity on Monday.

The purpose of a parish mission is to stir up and awaken in us the life of God that is ever-present. Realizing that life is often so routine, it can become difficult to see or perceive the obvious only because it is so familiar. God is always near us. We pay attention in our ordinary daily ways of prayer and faith practice. After a time, this becomes a routine and the practices we keep can seem to be an end in them self. God is sought, but not often readily seen or perceived. We feel faithful in our spiritual and religious practice, yet that which we most deeply seek is not often deeply taken in.

A parish mission is an opportunity to see and hear in a new way. It invites us to shake off the norm and be ready to seek the Lord in a fresh way. Sometimes what is heard can deeply touch us with the presence of God. Other times, we become more deeply aware of ourselves, and how God may be active or present within us. It may be a deep affirmation of God's love and care for us even though we have been feeling spiritually distant or stale. The grace may come as a call or conviction that inspires a need to change how we are relating to God and others. However it comes, the grace is the Lord's gift to reveal Himself to us in love that we might serve him with new peace and joy.

Father Marchionda is blest not only with the charism of Dominican preaching, but further inspires God's people with song and praise. Was it St. Augustine who said, 'the one who sings prays twice'? We are twice blest to have Father Marchionda join us for these important days. Please don't miss this opportunity to stir up your love for the Lord and faith in the community of the Church. Come, and bring your friends and neighbors.

Today's parable in the gospel is probably the most unappealing of all the parables of Jesus. More than any other, this story just doesn't seem right to us no matter how we might look at it. It is none-the-less a story told by Jesus to make a point about the nature and mind of God. This story follows the account of the Rich Young man who leaves Jesus preferring his many possessions. At the end of this parable, Peter who points out to Jesus, 'we have left everything to follow you. What will there be for us?' This setting prompts today's story.

In the story, Jesus addresses the conventional thinking regarding just payment for those who seek to follow him. For those who follow Jesus, the rules for payment are not the same. To be a day laborer is not an enviable position. Each day you may work for a different employer and you are dependant on the 'usual daily wage'. Jesus uses this example intentionally.

We who follow Jesus are dependant each day on our Father's providential care. Even in the Our Father we say, 'give us *each day* our daily bread'. Jesus establishes the point that we are dependant on God. To secure ourselves with gathered wealth may only leave us with the illusion of being dependant on ourselves and not on God.

The next tension is the question of being idle and agreeing on a just wage. The first group readily agrees to the usual daily wage and they go to work. Those hired later in day were first asked why they were standing around idle. They had not been hired, was the reply. They were not lazy or indifferent, just unemployed. They agreed on a just wage and went to work. Those hired in the last hour of the day are challenged for being idle all day. With no agreement about what they would be paid, they are also sent to the vineyard.

Now the part we don't like. At the end of the day, those who worked only the last hour are given the 'usual daily wage'. Not fair we cry, they only worked an hour. They do not deserve a full day's pay.

The word used here for the owner of the vineyard is 'kyrios', or Lord. In the vineyard of the Lord the usual daily wage is not measured by the amount of work done. A 'just wage' flows from the source of divine goodness. This establishes again our dependence on divine providence and not on what we accomplish. Though the story is unsettling to us, it is at least a positive unsettling. Despite ourselves, if we work in the vineyard of the Lord by faithfully following Jesus a just wage of divine abundance will be ours.

As the first reading points out, God's way of thinking is not the way we think, nor is God's way of doing things our way of doing things. To be a Christian is a humble way of living, but the reward will be the usual wage of unlimited divine mercy and abundance.

Father John Esper