

September 20, 25th Sunday (A) Mt. 20:1-16 Workers in Vineyard

One day a great crowd gathered outside the gates of Heaven. There was a great anticipation and restlessness as to what would happen next. St. Peter was seen whispering something to Jesus. After some tensed moments, Peter came out with an announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a predicament here. If we go by the record, none of you will qualify for heaven. But God is so good and generous. On behalf of the Blessed Trinity, I hereby declare general amnesty (a general forgiveness)! Open the gates, and let the heavenly feast begin. There was tremendous applause and rejoicing as the gates of heaven were partly opened. Then St. Peter took the microphone again. Everyone was quiet. "There will be final test though, but the general amnesty still stands!" With that, the gates were thrown wide open and everybody started coming in.

There was a group that refused to come in. The group's members went to St. Peter with a complaint: They said, "We sacrificed much and worked hard on earth. We follow your Ten Commandments. We pray regularly. We go to Mass every day. Some of us were catechists, lay cooperators, Lectors, Eucharistic ministers and church workers. How come we get the same reward as the others who lived dirty and useless lives? That's unfair!" And they refused to enter heaven. In fact, they organized a protest rally and pitched their tents outside the gates of heaven. "Well, that was the final test," St. Peter said. They were forever expelled from heaven, why? It is because they were still selfish, arrogant and proud. They were thinking of their merits instead of rejoicing in God's generosity.

In today's gospel the workers who were hired in the morning complained and protested that they were paid the same wage as those hired in the afternoon. "A gross injustice and it is unfair!" they complained. But is there an injustice happened? Legally, there is none, because the agreement was covered by a personal contract. There was mutual agreement between the workers and the employer on the wage, and he fulfilled it. We should keep in mind if we reflect today's gospel, that this gospel passage is not about justice and social injustice. It is all about God's generosity and mercy. It is because if we talk about justice and demand for it later, of what we do here on earth, all of us will end up outside God's kingdom. It is because the bad things we have done cannot compensate the good things we do. Eternal life is not a reward, but because God is so generous and merciful, it is God's gift to us. Let us bear this in mind that for God, all services of love whether they are big or small are important and accounted for, in His eyes. And because God is so generous, so we have to be grateful to Him. Believe me, that if God is only just, then all of us will end up outside God's kingdom. Amen.