

25th Sunday per Annum - A
Isaiah 55:6-9;
Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a;
Matthew 20:1-16a
Little Flower - 9/20/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate Catechetical Sunday. This year's theme is: "I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you." All of us are called to share the gift of faith we have received with others by being witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus.

The integrating theme of all three readings today can be found in the last two verses of today's reading from Isaiah. God through Isaiah said, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*"

Pope Francis teaches that mercy is the quality most proper to God. In Scripture, God's mercy has at least two meanings. In today's first reading, Isaiah invites sinners to turn to the Lord for mercy because God "*is generous in forgiving.*" God's mercy is, first of all, God's forgiveness. However, Scripture suggests that God not only forgives, but he also forgets. In other words, he also lets go of our sins. He no longer holds them against us. On the contrary, most of us find it very difficult to forgive others or even to forgive ourselves. Even when we do forgive others, we often cannot let go of the offense. God's willingness to forgive everything and anything is one way God's thoughts and ways are different from ours.

Today's Gospel illustrates the second meaning of mercy. Mercy is generosity. Jesus himself is the ultimate symbol of God's generosity. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son*" that we might have life.

If there is one parable that demonstrates that God's ways of thinking and acting are different from ours, it is this parable. Most of us, if we are honest, would side with the workers who worked all day in the heat and were paid the same amount as the workers who only worked one hour. If we were in their position, we would also feel unjustly treated. However, the landowner's response was interesting. First, he explained that there was no injustice. They had agreed to the usual wage, and they were paid the usual wage. However, he also reminded them of his right to spend his money as he chose. In other words, he had the right to be generous if he chose to be generous.

Likewise, the final verse of the Gospel also suggests that God's ways of thinking and acting are very different from ours: "*Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.*" In our culture, we glorify the rich, the famous, and the successful. Therefore, in our own lives we often become more concerned with acquiring riches, fame, and success than we are with loving God and others. Likewise, we often are blind to those who are not rich, famous, or successful and fail to see them, fail to see their gifts and talents, and fail to see their needs.

The question is why our thoughts and ways are so different from God's. The obvious answer is sin: original sin, the sin of the world, and our own personal sin. Scripture teaches that God created us in his own image and likeness. Instead, because of sin, we often try to re-create God in our image and likeness, projecting our ways of thinking and acting onto God. On the contrary, the Jesus of the Gospels thought and acted in radically different ways from the ways in which we think and act.

My brothers and sisters, in the Beatitudes Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy,*" that is, both God's forgiveness and generosity. Today's Liturgy challenges us to measure our thoughts and ways against God's thoughts and ways. Are we forgiving of others and ourselves? Are we generous with our goods, our time and talent, and, above all, with our love?