



Fr Jerome's Reflection

Wednesday in Ordinary Time

19 August 2020

Readings: Ezekiel 34:1-11, Psalm 23, Matthew 20:1-16

Today's Gospel presents a parable which is found only in Matthew's Gospel. It is not in the other Gospels. Like in all parables, Jesus tells a story about daily elements, daily things of the life of the people. He presents a picture of the social situation of His time, in which the listeners recognize themselves. At the same time, in the story of this parable, there are things which never take place in the reality of the life of the people, because speaking about the master, Jesus thinks about God, about His Father. This is why in the story of the parable the master does things which are surprising which never take place in the daily life of the listeners.

The background of the parable is the circumstance of the time, for Jesus as well as for Matthew. The workers of the first hour are the Jewish people, called by God to work in his vineyard. They bear the weight of the day, from Abraham to Moses, for over one thousand years. Now at the eleventh hour, Jesus calls the gentiles to work in his vineyard and they succeed in having the preference in the heart of God. "Thus the first ones will be last and the last will be first".

Those of the eleventh hour arrive. They have advantages and receive priority in regard to entrance into the Kingdom of God. When you wait in line for two hours, and a person arrives, and without saying anything she places herself before you. Would you accept this? Can these two situations be compared? (Hint: she places herself, rather than someone higher choosing to place her - does this change things?)

God's action surpasses our calculations and our human way of acting. He surprises us and sometimes it is uncomfortable. Has this happened to you in your life? What lessons have you drawn from this?

This parable uses "work" and "workers" to convey its message. Why? Is there also the message that to receive "payment" also requires work? To be a Christian demands work - it is not a passive existence, but rather an active participation in the work of God.

Prayer: Abandonment (Charles de Foucauld)

Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve
and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. Amen