

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Matthew 20:1-16

God Who Comes Looking for Us.

There is something strange about the landowner in today's Gospel. He cannot seem to stay home. He has a vineyard to manage. Workers to supervise. A harvest to oversee. But Jesus keeps telling us: "He went out." Early in the morning, he went out. Nine o'clock, he went out. Noon, he went out. Three o'clock, he went out. Five o'clock, when the working day is almost finished, he went out again.

There is something important in that. Because we often imagine faith as something that happens when people come in. Come into the church. Come to Mass. Come to confession. Come to the parish. Come back to God. And of course, all of that matters. But the God Jesus reveals today in the Gospel ... is constantly going out. And that should make us a little uncomfortable. Because churches run the risk of becoming very good at waiting. We open the doors. We publish the Mass times. We prepare bulletins. We make announcements. And then we wait ... we wait for people to come to us. But Jesus describes a God who apparently does not like waiting ... He goes looking.

In fact, one of the great temptations of the Church is to become so occupied with maintaining the vineyard that we forget there is a marketplace outside it. There are people all around us who will never walk through these doors. There are people who would never think to approach a priest. There are people who have been away from the Church for years upon years. And people who have convinced themselves that religion is simply not for them.

So maybe we have been asking the wrong question. We ask: "Why don't they come?" The Gospel asks: "Why haven't we gone?" Because Christianity did not begin with Jesus sitting in a building waiting for people to find Him. Jesus walked roads. He entered homes. He ate at tables. He touched lepers. He noticed Zacchaeus hiding in a tree. He spoke to a woman beside a well. He walked toward people everyone else walked away from. And eventually, He went so far looking for humanity that He stretched out His arms upon a Cross. That is our God. A God who goes out.

And if we belong to Him, eventually He will ask us to go out too. Not necessarily to preach on street corners. Sometimes "going out" means something much smaller. Calling the person nobody has called. Inviting someone for coffee. Speaking to the person standing alone. Asking someone, sincerely, "How are you doing?"—and actually staying long enough to hear the answer. The Good News can begin much earlier than talking about Jesus. It can begin when someone encounters a Catholic who notices them.

Because there is another detail in the Gospel. Every time the landowner goes out, he sees people. Others had walked through that marketplace all day. But he saw them. And there is a difference between looking at someone and seeing them. Our world is filled with people who are looked at constantly and seen almost never.

And that is something we can carry from this Gospel today: Do not simply ask God to bring people into your life. LOOK at the people He has already placed there. There may be someone standing in the marketplace of your ordinary day—at work, in your family, in your neighbourhood, even in the pew beside you—waiting for somebody to notice. The landowner could have stayed in his vineyard. But he went out. Jesus could have remained in heaven. But He came looking for us. And this week, somewhere beyond these doors, God may still be trying to bring someone home. And this time, He may be asking YOU to be the one who reaches THEM.