

The Church of Saint Boniface
September 20, 2020
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time



"Am I not free to do as I wish with my own money?
Are you envious because I am generous?"

(Matthew 20:16A)

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

To Grow Is To Accept A God of Surprises

In these pandemic days, being near somebody can cost you; social distancing, six feet apart, quarantine, isolation, masking, etc., are becoming common words in our daily conversations. 'Nearness' is not recommended at all. The message and tone of the readings this weekend is a direct opposite of what we are experiencing right now. 'Be near' to God, seek the Lord while he may be found or 'the Lord is near to all who call upon him' (Responsorial Psalm antiphon). Turning to God, accepting God, changing our ways to God's ways, being like God, opens the door to a God of surprises (God's generous grace).

*Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
(Isaiah 55. 6; 8).*

The prophet Isaiah in the first reading with an imperative urges the weary people of Israel to seek the Lord, to call upon him. Do it now! Make the decision and do not hesitate, do not doubt (how hesitation and doubt often can be a stumbling block to many things). They must also be clear that nearness to God means knowing that God's ways are not their ways. That His thoughts are not their thoughts. God is a God of surprises. He acts in total freedom. He cannot be tied down by human expectations or calculations. Neither can he be judged with human categories of success or failure. He is free to do as he wishes and this freedom is what will restore us. It is for our benefit.

What hesitation or doubts do I struggle with when it comes to God and his plan in my life? Are there moments of doubt? When and why? Have I made up my mind about who God is for me?

In the Gospel there is something odd about the Landowner. He is involved. He does the hiring himself. He goes out at dawn and then at various times of the day, seeking those who have not been hired or are unwanted. He wants all to be given something to do. Isn't this God's nature or image? He always 'seeks.' He is about 'giving not receiving.' His giving 'restores' and 'encourages.' He surprises those he seeks with abundant generosity. He pays the last, first and the first, last. Where is acceptable in human terms? Is this fair, we would ask?

Listening to this Gospel, we are challenged to change the way to look at God. He is one who seeks (never repulses or abandons), who freely gives. The Kingdom is a gift! There are no 'nobodies' with God. God's generous grace is given equally to all without measure and by God's wanting. No one controls this or Him. It is not about who deserves what. No credentials needed. Only seek (be near) Him. How often we have been benefited by God's goodness!

If we believe and worship this God, then something about his nature, character and attitude must rub off on us, too. What is it about Him that others might see in us? What must we adapt? In a world of distancing between people because of various reasons, a world of unfairness, a world of 'receivers,' can we surprise others (the nobodies) with our generosity? Can we sacrifice that those who are 'last' could have the joy of being 'first'? (Why is this hard?) Can we lift others up? Can we discourage less?

Let our relationships with others and God be not transactional but be true, genuine and about 'the other's good' too, not only ours.

A Blessed Week in the Lord!

— Father Anthony



Confirmation Parent / Candidate Meeting
(Class of 2020-21)
Wednesday, September 30, 7:00 PM
In the Parish Hall

MASS INTENTIONS

Sept. 27	8:00 AM	Fred & Irene Raboin , by Marc & Regina Raboin
Oct. 4	8:00 AM	James & Regina Fisher , by Marc & Regina Raboin

MANY THANKS to all the parishioners who contributed to the food and supplies needed for our week at North Star family shelter, August 30 to September 5. We served four families. Also, thanks to the continued support of those able to make dinner: Marcela Coronel, Sue Whittier, Carol Archambault, Geri Gardner, Allison Lilly and Buffy Peznola. Your support of families in need is much appreciated!

PARISH DRIVE-IN MOVIE

Saturday, Sept. 26 at 8 PM

Featuring **“Hidden Figures”** (rated PG)

The story of a team of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program.

Join us in the back parking lot...and don't forget to bring snacks!

RCIA (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS)

- Are you an adult 18 years or older and have not received the Sacraments?
- Are you an adult interested in getting Baptized?
- Are you a non-catholic Christian who would like to become a Catholic?

RCIA begins October 2020. Call and register at the Parish office or contact Lucy Marcil.



Our parish food drive for the month of September will benefit Saint Francis of Assisi Food Pantry in Fitchburg.

Non-perishable items most needed:

- Canned Meats • Canned Tuna Fish • Soups
- Cereal • Pasta • Pasta Sauce

Please leave donations below the statue of Mary near the altar before Masses, or during parish office hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CONTACT-FREE OUTDOOR DROP OFF TABLE 11:00–12:00 on Saturday, Sept. 19th and 26th for those who may not wish to enter the church. Thanks to the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus for their help.

COLLECTION REPORT

Week of September 13	
– Sunday Offering	\$2,636
– Fuel/Maintenance	105
– Other	20
Total	<u>\$2,761</u>
ACH/Online Giving (August)	\$5,147

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



GRAND RAFFLE TICKETS

Please return sold tickets with stubs and donations in the offertory basket at the church entrance or to the parish office. If you would like additional tickets, please call or email the parish office.

GIFT BASKET RAFFLE

Yes, we will also have our famous gift basket raffle this year. Watch for more info!

St. Bernard Cemetery
Lot & Columbarium Sale
Oct. 1–31

Lots available in the new Calvary Section.
Columbarium niches also at reduced prices.
Call Ray Spagnuolo at the cemetery office:
978-342-4820

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST
EVERYTHING IN RECENT HURRICANES
AND WILDFIRES.

The Bishops' Emergency Disaster Fund is asking Catholics around the country to help with relief efforts. Visit worcesterdiocese.org for more information.

Just Imagine

I taught grade school religion for a short semester when I was about 22. By accident I discovered a great trick of teaching, one I needed very much. The class, you see, was in complete chaos each time I arrived in mid-day.

But if I told a story, even the simplest story, the pandemonium ceased. It morphed into rapt attention. You could hear a pin drop. Until the story ended, that is, and then anarchy resumed.

I never did find another way besides stories to reach these little cherubs, even though I memorized each name and each picture in the long list, called different ones out for serious talks, etc.

There must be a special part of the brain devoted to stories.

It was only years later that I applied this insight. Why does the gospel get such special attention at Mass? Why do we hold the book up and parade it to the pulpit? Because it is a story, the story of Jesus. We are struck by the narrative about him. Within the gospels, which are themselves stories, we find the parables Jesus told.

So take a good look at the parable in Sunday's Gospel and let the story lead you. See if it works. Imagine the landowner hiring laborers for his vineyard as he shakes their rough hands and invites them to work. You can see their smiles, since they know they will get the usual daily wage.

The day gets hotter. And hotter. High noon has come and the owner walks back to town. Men are leaning on buildings, loitering, bored but still hopeful. The owner goes to them and offers to hire them. They come to life and hurry off to his vineyard to **earn just half a day's wages. It is more than nothing.**

Then the work day is about over. The owner is still in town for whatever reason, and what should he see but strong men lolling about in doorways, wet with sweat from the heat and from their dejection. To their surprise, he hires them too.

Day ends and "just wages" are handed out: the exact same amount for every worker, no matter how many or how few hours anyone had worked. Look at the faces. Anger in the ones who had slaved all day — This is not fair! We demand our rights! We put in the time and these oafs did nothing.

What does the story mean? Obviously these wages are not a strict remuneration for hours worked. They more like a gift from a fond heart. How does this feel to you?

Didn't Jesus tell his parable to show how God's caring heart works, how he gives a depth of love to each person in this world, especially to ones who suffer and are left behind?

If it is hard to see, ask for light.

— John Foley, SJ

Saints of the Week

September 21.

SAINT MATTHEW

Saint Matthew was a Jew who worked for the Romans as a tax collector. His fellow Jews considered him a traitor, and resented him. The Pharisees viewed him, and all tax collectors, as a sinner. So it was a real shock to hear that Jesus called such **a man to be one of his followers. But that's** the kind of thing that Jesus did.

Saint Matthew is the Patron Saint of Accountants, Actors, Bankers, Bookkeepers, Tax collectors and Taxi Drivers.



September 22.

SAINT LORENZO RUIZ

Saint Lorenzo Ruiz, the first canonized Filipino martyr, became a witness to the faith almost by accident. Fleeing a legal charge, he ended up with a group of Dominicans headed for Japan, where they were all arrested, tortured, and finally executed.



September 23.

SAINT PIO of PIETRELCINA

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, popularly known as Padre Pio, grew up in southern Italy. At the age of 15, he joined the Capuchins and was ordained in 1910. In 1918 he received the stigmata, the markings of the crucified Jesus.



September 24.

SAINT JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Saint John Henry Newman, the 19th-century's most important English-speaking Roman Catholic theologian, spent the first half of his life as an Anglican and the second half as a Roman Catholic. He was a priest, popular preacher, writer, and eminent theologian in both churches.



September 25.

SAINTS LOUIS MARTIN and ZÉLIE GUÉRIN

Frustrated in their attempts to enter Religious Life, Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin married and had nine children. Their youngest child, who entered a Carmelite convent at 15, became Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, affectionately known as the Little Flower.



Good God, Evil Eye

In the parable of the householder and the vineyard workers, when the master pays the eleventh-hour people the same wage (a denarius, normal pay for a day's labor) that he pays to those who had borne the heat of the day, our sense of fairness is violated. We understand easily the grumbling of the full-day workers: if the one-hour workers get a full day's pay, should not they, in all fairness, get **something like twelve days' pay?** The householder's defense seems lame.

The fact that the full-day workers had agreed to a denarius does not really address the apparent lack of proportion in the eleventh-hour workers getting for one hour's

work what they ("the heat of the day" people) had worked so hard to earn. The householder may indeed be "generous" with respect to the eleventh-hour people, but in this situation, the full-day workers experience the normal day's wage as decidedly ungenerous. "Generous" would be something like maybe ten or twelve denarii.

God's goodness would create a kind of equality in the household of the kingdom that goes beyond our small sense of "what is right."

But despite most contemporary English translations of the adjective that the householder applies to himself in verse 15, the issue is not generosity but goodness. For a literal rendering of Matthew 20:15b (reflected accurately in the King James and the Rheims versions) reads: "Is your eye evil because I am good?" The importance of the difference between "generous" and "good" becomes apparent when we consider the fuller context.

This is, after all, not a teaching about just wages but a parable that begins, "The kingdom of heaven is like ... " As readers of Matthew, by now two-thirds through this Gospel, we know that "kingdom of heaven" is not a name for the place where God lives but the realm of human persons responding to God's reign freshly inaugurated through Jesus of Nazareth. As in other householder parables, the master is of course God. And the issue of God's goodness and what it takes to relate appropriately to that goodness is raised in the previous chapter, when a young man approaches Jesus and asks, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?"

And Jesus answers, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good." In the ensuing conversation, Jesus says that following the commandments is doing "the good" but that full goodness, indeed "perfection," comes with letting go of everything and following him, Jesus. Relating to the ultimately good One, in other words, is converting to a new way of looking at and living one's life — i.e., receiving the teaching of Jesus and becoming his disciple.

Are you envious because I am generous
[Greek: *Is your eye evil because I am good*?]
(Matt 20:15b)

When Peter follows this with his question about how he and the rest of the disciples will be rewarded for giving up all to follow him, Jesus speaks of reigning with

him, enjoying the hundredfold and inheriting eternal life. But then, as if to disabuse the disciples (and Matthew's readers) of conventional notions of accomplishment and reward, Jesus launches into our parable about the landholder. The parable flies in the face of normal expectations about accomplishments and reward, or work and wages. **Perhaps the key lies in the master's agreement with the third-hour (9 AM) people to pay them "what is just."**

At this point in the story, we readers or listeners naturally take this to mean something less than the denarius promised the workers who started at dawn. Along with the eleventh-hour people, we bristle at the news that all workers will be paid equally, we hear Jesus say, "Is your eye evil because I am good?" In the Mediterranean world, one of the things that makes for an "evil eye" is to look upon someone else's goods with jealousy—to make invidious comparison. The very word "invidious" (from Latin *invidere* "to look at with envy") derives from that understanding of evil eye.

As Isaiah reminds us in the First Reading, God's ways are not ours; God's goodness would create a kind of equality in the household of the kingdom that goes beyond our small sense of "what is right." To the extent we make invidious comparisons—like Martha with Mary, or like the elder son with respect to his prodigal brother—to that extent our eye is evil and we are blind to the goodness of God.

— Dennis Hamm, SJ

Employer or Patron

What is God like? The answer to this common question always reflects the culture of the questioner or the one who **answers the question.** Today's parable reports one of Jesus' many answers to this question. It should be no surprise that in this parable God behaves in accord with Middle Eastern values.

Limited Good

In general, Americans believe that “there is always more where this came from,” whether it is oil, jobs, money, or whatever. This attitude makes it extremely difficult for Americans to understand concepts such as shortages, extinction, or anything similar.

Our Mediterranean ancestors in the faith believed “there is no more where this came from.” Everything (jobs, wealth, honor, or whatever one could imagine) was limited in quantity and already distributed. The jobs at the vineyard were already filled. How dare any worker think there might be more jobs?

Everyone in the Mediterranean world of antiquity and the present seeks to have a patron.

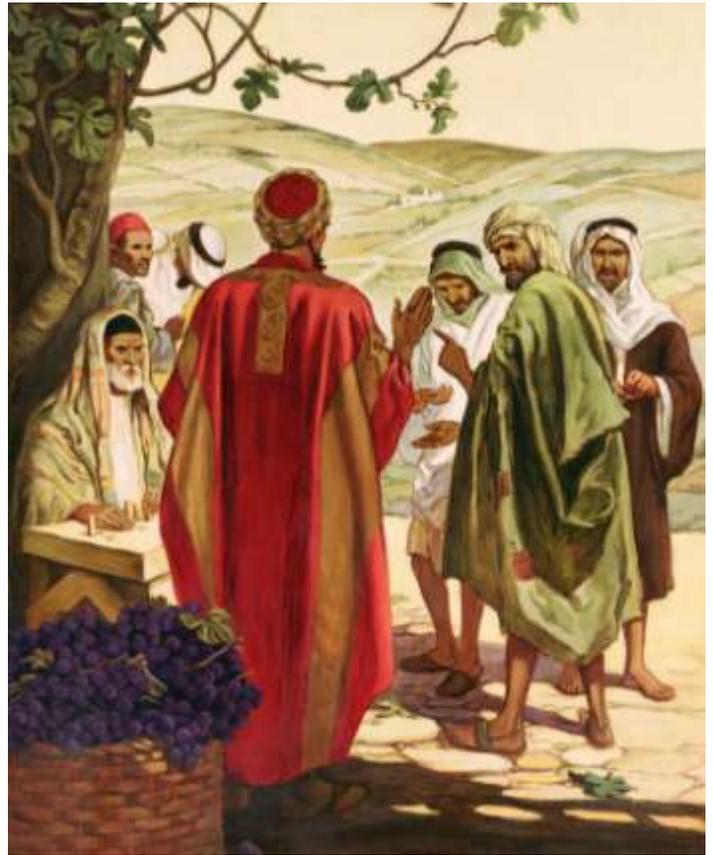
Moreover, to ask for a job is to deprive the employer of something he owns. This is shameful. Instead, workers have to be invited by the owner to work for him. The owner in this parable goes out four times in one day looking for workers to invite, and each time he hires everyone in sight. Such behavior by the owner and the potential workers is very honorable, because it respects the cultural idea that all goods—including jobs—are limited.

Patronage

In America, workers look for jobs, employers hire the best qualified workers, they agree on a wage and respect a practice called “seniority.” None of this existed in the ancient Mediterranean world and none of these elements can be found in the parable.

Only to the first hired does the owner promise “the usual daily wage.” They agree to accept it. To the second (and presumably all subsequent groups), the owner says: “I will pay you whatever is right.”

At the end of the day, the owner pays the workers beginning with the last hired. This is an important narrative point without which the story would collapse because those hired first would have no reason to hang around if they were paid first. This point also indicated to ancient Mediterranean



peoples that the owner wears two hats: he is an employer but can also be a patron.

A patron is a person of means who freely chooses to treat other people (always of lower status) “as if” they were family members. No one can bid for or “earn” such treatment, but everyone in the Mediterranean world of antiquity and the present seeks to have a patron.

The vineyard owner treats the last hired generously and graciously, “as if” they were relatives. They did nothing to “earn” such treatment. The owner gave them “what is right” for relatives. At the same time, the owner treats the first hired in accord with their agreement. If he chose to, the owner could disregard the agreement and treat the first hired generously, “as if” they were relatives. But he doesn't so choose. To the first hired, the vineyard owner chooses to be employer; to the last hired, the vineyard owner chooses to be a patron.

Jesus' lesson is not about economics but about God from a Middle Eastern perspective. Insinuated in Jesus' explanation is that God's choice for treating people may reflect how people deal with God. Such ideas clash with American economic ideas of equal opportunity, contracts, seniority, and the like. How would God behave from an American perspective?

Saint Boniface Church

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
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Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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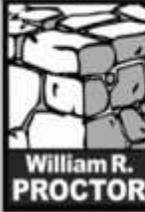
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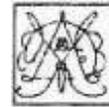
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