

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Based on Is 55:6-9, Phil 1:20-24, 27 and Mt 20:1-16

“Avoiding ‘grumpy’ faces, ‘complaining’ tongues and ‘grumbling’ tones and recognizing the immense wonders of God’s Grace at every step of our life, in order to have ‘joyful’ faces, ‘grateful’ tongues and ‘thankful’ tones!”

Grumbling and complaining had become a habit for old Mrs. Dolly. She would find a point to be critical of anything and everything. Finally, it so happened one day, that the Pastor of her parish felt he had found something about which she could make no complaint: the old lady had a very excellent produce in her vegetable garden – of the finest potatoes in that area. “Oh, finally, I hope you must be well pleased” said the pastor, with a gleaming smile, to Old Mrs Dolly, “Every one’s excitedly talking about how wonderful are the potatoes in your garden this year!” However, with a frown, the old lady rumbled back, “Well, they are not so bad. But where are the bad ones for the pigs??”

Well, dear friends, the one who puts on the tinted spectacles of grumbling, invariably finds a reason to complain about anything in life, right? As it is said, “it is usually not so much the greatness of our troubles, as the littleness of our spirit that makes us complain.” The Gospel of the Day presents a group of people who find their way into grumbling even about, perhaps the most undeserved subject of complaining: the Free Gift of the Grace of the Generous God!

Today we see Jesus presents the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard likening it to the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mt 20: 1). “It’s not fair” is a common phrase that we raise in our day-to-day activities. Children, while playing games with each other,

invariably raise a “It’s not fair” slogan, especially when they feel some cheating is done by the Referee or the opposite team players.

Students quote the “It’s not fair” phrase when sometimes they get lesser marks than expected, and blame the professor or the system. Employees in a company chant “It’s not fair” when they feel that somehow they have been given lesser pay or treated unfairly with respect to promotions etc. Family members or friends shout “It’s not fair” when there are impartialities or favoritism or ignorance discovered in relationships.

In other words a sense of dissatisfaction reigns in many circumstances of our daily life. Such was the displeasure expressed by those workers, who had toiled the whole day and received just one denarius, in the Parable of Jesus of the Workers in the Vineyard: “It’s not fair!.”

These workers felt... “It was not fair”...that the landowner had equated the wages of those who came in last to them, who had toiled the whole day! ... that there had been no consideration to the immense toil in the blazing sun that they had put in! ... that the principle of justice and impartiality had been badly violated and trampled upon!

But the Master of the Vineyard was quick to point out to them their misconception in such a thinking...He reminded them first of all, that the wages that they received, was something that they had already agreed upon. He also brought to their notice that the wages given to the others were simply out of his generosity and good-will.

How often do we also raise the cry of complains and ring in the growls of grumbling when we see others finding pleasure in greater favors and happiness of life...“I toil

so much in life, and I don't seem to be really growing prosperous or at least being freed from the pangs of daily life struggles... But someone else, has a relaxed and cozy life and still find themselves enjoying with the comforts and luxuries of life."

"I try my level best, with much hard-work and labor in order to excel in my talents and I don't seem to reap its fruits...But someone else, maybe blessed by natural talents or sheer out of luck, seems to be doing much better and enjoying greater harvests of success."

The workers who grumbled did not complain because they did not get the "just" wage...but their complaint was because "they were made equal to the others." It was a complaint arising out of... "unfair comparison" ... "jealousy in seeing others being rewarded more" ... "we being made small before others"

Perhaps, this is where we need to make a radical shift in our perspectives. God's Grace comes to human persons in different levels and measures. Grace is defined as "favor – the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to His call to become children of God...partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life". Therefore to make bargains on Grace... to make it a "countable" entity...would be a clear violation of its very essential nature of being a "free gift"!

Hence, dear Friends, what is required is to make a shift in perspectives...from "complaining" to being "thankful"... from "grumbling" to being "grateful"... from saying "It's not fair!" to saying "It's Your Grace."

In today's first reading, Lord reminds us through Prophet Isaiah, "For My Thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My Ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My Ways higher than your ways, and My

Thoughts than your thoughts!” (Is 55:8-9). And in the second reading, St Paul invites as well as challenges us with his words: “... let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ...!” (Phil 1:27). Life constantly pushes us into corners which make us have “grumpy” faces, “complaining” tongues and “grumbling” tones.

But, dear friends, can we recognize and realize the immense wonders of God’s Grace at every step of our life... and lead a life with “joyful” faces, “grateful” tongues and “thankful” tones?