

Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 24, 2017

Today's reading from Isaiah and Jesus' parable about the vineyard continue the theme of recent weeks by calling us to be more authentic reflections of God whose ways and thoughts are so unlike our own. Specifically, God's ways and thoughts are such that even the most wicked person imaginable can turn to God and find mercy and generous forgiveness.

If we think about the most horrible person we know, Isaiah insists that even they are not without hope. Even these are forgivable in the eyes of the God who made them and desires their well-being and redemption. With a mercy and a goodness that many of us may find illogical, exasperating and even unjust, God simply says: Seek me. Turn to me and be forgiven.

We might even argue... how can there be forgiveness for the career criminal who "finds religion" at the eleventh hour and repents. How can his/her countless sins be simply swept away? Like the workers hired in the morning, we too might be tempted to think that surely God's ways are not fair.

Well, in a way, we would be right in thinking that. But the reason for our anxiety in this case is because we continue to think in terms of *merit* rather than *grace*.

Like the workers in the vineyard who had worked the entire day, we who do our best to grow in faith and to translate our relationship with God into the

love and service of others may think that we have somehow earned God's forgiveness and our redemption.

Today's parable makes it very clear that no one merits forgiveness, mercy or salvation. These are God's gifts to give, not because we're good but because God is God. Certainly, these issues can be very hard to wrap our heads and our hearts around.

But we, for our part, need to only let God be God and then to stand in awe and thanksgiving at the ways and thoughts of God that we have yet to understand.

The reality of the reign of God is here. God wants our active participation. He wants us to work in his vineyard, not as hired laborers but as children of the generous Father.

As a result of the Amazing Parish and Divine Renovation conferences...we have been able to see new and exciting ways of moving from maintenance to mission. In other words, creating a healthy leadership model for our parish, of fostering growth in St. Joseph's prayer and sacramental life and providing greater opportunities for faith building Bible Studies and catechesis for everyone of all ages.

After discussions with our leadership team and pastoral council it has been agreed that one of the ways to begin this process is by drafting a new pastoral council constitution that will empower PC to implement various parish and disciple making

programs and to truly represent the members of our parish by giving everyone a chance for their voice to be heard.

While this is being done, I am temporarily suspending the pastoral council until a new constitution can be written and implemented.

So in the next 8 months or so, all of the members of our parish are going to be given an opportunity to tell us what programs you would like to see, how our Pastoral Council can better serve your needs and the needs of our community, and how we can open up doors of opportunity for everyone to become more active in the life and ministry of St. Joseph.

Until that time, I am asking each of our committees to continue submitting monthly reports that we will publish in the bulletin for all to see.

By next summer, we will be ready to reform our pastoral council, and with your help and input, we can then move on to the next step of helping St. Joseph grow into a truly amazing parish.