

SUNDAY REFLECTIONS – 25th Sunday Year A – 24th September, 2017

CARMELITES reflect on THE SEASONS OF CREATION

**MATTHEW 20, 1-16**

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So, they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

REFLECTION

The parable of the vineyard is a tough one for most of us. We tend to focus on the phrase "The first will be last and the last will be first."

However, perhaps Christ's question of "Why do you stand here idle all day?" merits our attention. God's vineyard is in trouble. It needs tending.



Should we stop idling and go into God's vineyard where together we embrace the poor, the broken, and all of creation? Do we answer the call to serve all of creation, just as St. Francis answered?

We are told that in Jesus' time a denarius was a daily wage.

So, the Vineyard owner was ensuring that those who worked for him and their families had enough to live on that day, as well as ensuring that his grapes were picked and the vineyard looked after.

Then, it raises a question: if people got the same pay whether they worked all day or just for one hour, who would turn up to look after the vineyard early the following morning? But that is not the point Jesus is making in the parable but it is something his audience would be considering, and so should we. If someone is being generous, fair and looking after their community, how would the community respond?

Both the community AND the vineyard owner need their common home. They are both bound to it. It keeps all of them alive and it is the responsibility of all of them to care for it.

It would be the backdrop for every moment of their lives, their successes, failures, from cradle to grave, bringing them together and sustaining their lives and their family and community, body and soul.

For the owner, he would know that importance of the vineyard and how people (including himself) depended upon it. A great responsibility. Without it, they would all have to move on, or perish.

Loving God, May we never lose hold of the hope that is in you. We pray for our common home, scarred by conflict and natural disaster. Bring healing to its lands and cleansing to its waters. Bring justice to its peoples and peace to its nations. Bring life for today and hope for the future.

God of all Eternity, ignite in us, your people, the hope that we will heal our broken world, and grow in us the perseverance to keep praying and working towards that day when your creation will once again be whole and free.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

Generous God, we thank you: For the gifts you have given us, the abundance of your Creation, and the beauty that surrounds us.

And lead us to play our part, so that now and in generations to come all your children may share in our hope for a better world.

You are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Bring healing to our lives that we may protect the world and not prey on it that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.



Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

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Any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labour, as Saint John Paul II wisely noted.

According to the biblical account of creation, God placed man and woman in the garden he had created (cf. Gen 2:15) not only to preserve it (“keep”) but also to make it fruitful (“till”). Labourers and craftsmen thus “maintain the fabric of the world” (Sir 38:34).

Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things: “The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them” (Sir 38:4).

INTERCESSIONS

- God, we are awed by your creation and its constant cycles of transformation. Christ’s resurrection is manifested in every season, whether it is a time to harvest, to plant, or to await new life. Teach us how to respond to the challenges and changes in our planet and in our lives.
- As we reflect on the readings from today’s Mass, help us understand them through the lens of God’s creation.
- For the highly indebted countries: that their people will, through debt forgiveness, overcome lack of education opportunities, inadequate health care, poor housing and inadequate utilities, let us pray: May we be forgiving from our hearts.
- For those who are committed to justice and human liberation: that they may continue to seek and expose the roots of injustice and oppression but not lose courage and hope when faced with opposition.
- God of life, help us to choose life, not death. God of life, help us to respect, not destroy. God of life, help us treasure, not control. God of life, help us see our value not in things, but in your gifts. God of life, beat our swords into plowshares. Beat are spears into pruning hooks.

Pledge of Commitment

To Protect and Heal God’s Creation

- ✚ We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
- ✚ We have come to help protect God’s creation.
- ✚ We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.
- ✚ We have come to stand together against all threats to life.
- ✚ We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God’s creation: the sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.