

25th Sunday – Year A

My father and I did not talk about religion much. If we kids had a question, we generally asked mom. She was a religion teacher, after all, and lead the family in religious practices at home.

My dad and I did have a conversation about this passage from Matthew's gospel, though. I don't remember how it came about, but I'll never forget the impact it made on me.

Dad told me that he thought of himself as one of the workers who arrived in the vineyard late in the day. I was caught off guard by that comment.

Being a cradle Catholic I just assumed that we were a family of full-day workers, having been about the business of the Lord from the very beginning.

Dad had converted to Catholicism, though. Growing up, his family were what I call prairie Christians. They went to the church closest to where they lived. I don't believe they were overly religious.

When dad became Catholic the cradle Catholics at St. John's let him know that he was a latecomer, and even though he had married into an unquestioningly Catholic family, the jury was still out on him.

He didn't talk about that much, but as I look back I

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believe he struggled with that.

I think that's a modern day example of how today's parable highlights some of the basic dynamics that still prevail in our dealings with one another.

We're tempted still to look for some angle from which to view our relationships so that we are in the privileged position. That could be making judgments on the basis of how long our family has been in the parish or by the number of times we go to Mass when we don't have to, or by the size of our checkbook, just to name a few of the preferred perspectives.

And all the while we forget the basic point of the whole enterprise. From God's perspective what counts is that his people, the ones he created out of love, all reach the end goal of what he had in mind for them from the very beginning—fullness of life with him for all eternity.

In the parable we see the vineyard owner doling out wages on the basis of need—regardless of when the workers made it to the vineyard, they would go home that evening with enough wages to buy bread to feed their family.

God wants to see each of his sons and daughters have what they need to live lives in keeping with their human dignity. Sure, there's work involved,

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and some are more capable of work than others.

That doesn't change the fact of God's ultimate goal—that everyone would have what they need to come to the knowledge of the truth of God's love. It's hard to deny that before that can happen certain basic needs must be met.

When we engage in those corporal works of mercy that help others meet their basic needs, we have aligned ourselves with God's goals for the kingdom. We need not worry about our own salvation in doing so. God has already promised us that we will receive our recompense. He did that at the beginning and nothing will change that.