

# Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time [a]

September 21, 2008

## Readings

Isaiah 55:6-9

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a

## Calendar

September 21: Peace One Day <http://www.peaceoneday.org>

September 21: Autumnal Equinox (Northern Hemisphere)

September 25: National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims <http://www.pomc.org/>

September 27: Memorial of Saint Vincent de Paul

September 29: Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) starts at sunset.

## Quotes

Politics in our country often can be a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites, and media hype. The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable.

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship:  
A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, 14*

“Individual initiative alone and the mere free play of competition could never assure successful development. One must avoid the risk of increasing still more the wealth of the rich and the dominion of the strong, whilst leaving the poor in their misery and adding to the servitude of the oppressed.”

--Pope Paul IV, 1967, *On the Development of Peoples*, #33

“The pace of change is so far-reaching and rapid nowadays that it is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one’s obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one’s means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.”

Vatican II, *Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* #30

It is right to struggle against an unjust economic system that does not uphold the priority of the human being over capital and land.

John Paul II, *The Hundredth Year*, #35

While everything around me is every changing, ever dying, there is underlying that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates....For I can see in the midst of death, life persists, in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists

--Mohandas K. Gandhi

## Thoughts for your consideration

In the second reading, Paul struggles between a desire for the next world and a commitment to this one. He opts not to get out of the world, but to be rooted in this world and to continue to be of service to the body of Christ and the work of the world.

The gospel story today anchors us, by a very concrete story, in some real issues of the world – issues of justice and rights. The story might lead us to reflect on issues like: justice for workers, the necessity of a living wage, the right of workers to organize, the extreme inequality of pay in the United States between upper management and production workers, sweatshops, unemployment, the importance of capital versus the importance of labor, the great inequality in economic resources between various nations, etc.

On another level, a fundamental theme of the scriptures is that God's way of looking at things is different than that of human beings. ["For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD."] We might say that God's way of looking at things is different than that of our consumer culture or economic system or a philosophy of materialism or an attitude of rugged individualism. The parable challenges us to look at many things from a different perspective.

Catholic Social Teaching seeks to respect the value and dignity of the individual human person and also seeks to value the common good. The goal of life is not to have more than everyone else. Neither is the primary goal absolute fairness. The goal is not material possessions. There is something more going on in the vision of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the parable is not to tell us literally how to run a business. The parable does help us to see God's values in a new way. The vision of the gospel is the vision of a God who is excessively generous. The reign of God is about people who are in love with this generous, forgiving God and what to share that generosity with everyone especially the poor. The reign of God is about people, like Paul, who are not in the "religion thing" for a bigger reward, but rather just want to share the vision of Jesus Christ. The reign of God is about proclaiming this vision in our actions – in our way of living and in the structures of our society. The reign of God calls us to imitate the irrational generosity of God.

If we let this vision confront the values of our society and our culture, it may turn out to be very revolutionary.

## Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

Have you ever received a reward that you felt you did not deserve?

How did you feel? How did you react?

How did it change your perspective on the world?

## Actions – Links

**Network**, the National Catholic Social Justice Lobby is working to support an effort to **help Iraqi refugees**. They are encouraging people to get their congress person to support H.R. 6496 which would try to help Iraqi refugees in a comprehensive way. You are asked to write your representative and urge him or her to sign on as a cosponsor of H.R. 6496. For info go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/alert/?alertid=11709476&type=CO>

**Concerned over Effects on Families, Communities, Bishops Urge President Bush, Homeland Security to Drop Raids on workplaces for immigration enforcement.** You can read about it at <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2008/08-130.shtml>

## “Crazy Facts”

According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, in August the **unemployment rate** increased to 6.1 percent. Over the past 12 months, the number of unemployed persons has increased by 2.2 million and the unemployment rate has risen by 1.4 percentage points, with most of the increase occurring over the past 4 months. In August, the unemployment rates for adult men (5.6 percent), adult women (5.3 percent), whites (5.4 percent), blacks (10.6 percent), and Hispanics (8.0 percent) all rose.

## Prayers of Intercession

*Response: God, inspire us with a strong spirit of justice.*

For justice for all workers, we pray....

For those who perform difficult and messy jobs for inadequate pay, we pray.....

For all executives and owners of companies that they may treat all with justice, we pray....

For those working people who do not have health insurance, we pray.....

For women who are not being paid as much as men for the same work, we pray.....

For immigrants in our country who work while in fear of being deported, we pray.....

## Prayer – Meditation

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.

Replace our shopping sprees with celebrations of community.

Replace our busyness with contemplation.

Change our things into gifts.

Change our violence into your peace.

God of life, help us to live as sisters and brothers.

Inspire us to be generous in all our dealings.

Inspire us to work for the common good.

Inspire us to speak out for those without power.

God of life, help us to choose life, not death.