

Homily. 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.A. 19/20 September 2020.

In what's turning out to be a year of emergencies it's difficult to feel that God is near to us when we call. More likely, the words of the 1st reading that ring most truly in our ears and hearts will be that God's thoughts are not our thoughts nor God's ways our ways either. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts — it is the Lord who speaks.

Yet, with so many personal and family, financial and social problems besetting and besieging us from every side we need to recall and hold fast to the light of our faith which assures us that our compassionate and merciful God is with us in this mess, albeit in ways we can't grasp or fully fathom right now.

As for the parable, we need to think of God's vineyard as being this world, as being our society, our Church also, and our many relationships and connections all trying to bear up and hold together under the strain of this challenging and changing time. We, and all of these things, are God's vineyard. This means acknowledging that God is ultimately in control and responsible for how things turn out. Gathered together in the market place, we are the labourers looking for work, offering ourselves with our various talents and skills. We want to be employed, engaged and to contribute in ways that make a difference for the better, earning our keep, the bread of meaning and the wine of hope, our unity and life in Christ.

Assuring us that God is hiring from daybreak until the eleventh hour, the hour before nightfall, the story tells us that all who join in the work of God

will be treated both justly and generously; that no matter when we sign on or how long or much we contribute, God will give us all that we need. This isn't the way that we operate our businesses or run our communities and families, but God's ways and thoughts are different and higher than ours.

Generosity and surplus, abundance and having more than enough for everyone are the values that lie behind God's mind and ways, for to God shortage poses no fear and meanness has no place. Contrary to our ways, with God the last become first and those who believe themselves first and most favoured of all will find themselves last in line, because everything we have and all that we are is a gift from our generous God.

In the present which we know is tough, when tight times are upon us, remembering just who is in charge of the vineyard, of our world, our Church, our society and our lives in such good and generous ways gives us courage to face uncertainty. Knowing the truth about how very differently God thinks and acts makes valuable all that we offer and do for one another and for the future hiding just beyond the horizon of our sight.