

Homily092020

## HOW DOES A GOOD STEWARD ACT?

In 1977, my parents and I took a one week trip to Rome and Assisi in June. My closest priest friend was studying in Rome and he would act as our guide. It was wonderful. While we were there, our then Archbishop Cardinal John Krol also came to Rome because he served on one of the Vatican Commissions. His Eminence took the opportunity to invite the priests of our diocese who were then studying in Rome to join him for dinner hosted at a convent of Polish sisters living in Rome. There were about six priests. They informed the Cardinal that I happened to be in Rome with my parents and an invitation was extended to me to join with the other priests.

We gathered in a large parlor and there were pre-prandials and little Polish hors d'oeuvres. His Eminence was in very good spirits and moved from one priest to another. Encouraging and congratulating them and in his hand was a crisp new fifty-dollar bill folded in half and then folded in half again. As he shook each priest's hand the fifty changed ownership. Nothing elaborate but a gift very much appreciated. Fifty dollars was a week's pay for us back then. He came to me last and welcomed me with the others and slipped me a fifty too. I wasn't one of the priests studying in Rome but it did not matter. I have often thought how special it made me feel to have been included and how, if he had not included me I could not have expected him to but I would have been hurt not to be included. That was one moment over forty-five years ago. But I still remember.

The workers in today's gospel who bristle at receiving only a day's wage at the end of the day know that that is what they had agreed upon. But they witnessed how generous the owner had been by giving more to the other workers than they had actually earned. So they began to think that maybe they too would share in that kind of generosity. But the owner does not do that. And it rankles. They flash him a look. You know the look. They felt they had been used, perhaps even taken advantage of. And they did not like it a little bit. No we don't. But they had not been used. And they received what they agreed to and needed.

But go back to the beginning of the story. It starts out by Jesus saying that the KINGDOM OF GOD is like... The Kingdom of God. So, what Jesus is trying to communicate is how God goes out—all the time, all day long, all throughout our lives—looking to provide for his people. God goes out early in people's lives and during their teens and then when they get married and have a family and then when their kids marry and there are grandchildren. And even at the very end of our lives when we have little time left, God goes out looking for us. God says: Come into my vineyard. I will give you what is just. What is "just" when you work only one hour? What is "just" when you have not lived your life appropriately or well or morally upright? What is "just" when you

finally come to your senses at the end of your life and realize where you messed up and went wrong and acted really selfishly? Well, what does the owner give them? A single day's wage. Not a lot. Just a little. Just enough. Just right. What is just.

The owner gives the usual daily wage. What is that? What it takes to live this day. What it takes to live. Forever. The daily wage here is heaven. Whether you live God's way all your life and make sacrifices or whether you slip in at the very end, what God wants to give you is heaven. To everyone. Acknowledge the gift and be appreciative. Don't compare. Just be grateful. Hard to do. Necessary to do. God does not owe heaven to us. God gives heaven to us. Only possible with God's grace giving us an awareness of just what Our God is doing in our lives. All the time.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.

My friends, I beg your indulgence for five more minutes. Today is Stewardship Sunday. We have a theme for this year: **The Promise of Hope and Healing**. Because of the impact of the corona-virus on all of us, each family and each parish has been impacted in different ways. Some of you have lost jobs. Some have had their daily regimens and routines pretty much upset. Family finances have been impacted. Parish finances have been impacted.

In the bulletin today is an information sheet about our parish finances for the past year and our tentative budget for this year. We experienced a shortfall in parishioner contributions last year. But we were also blessed to receive some substantial bequests and donations from parishioners that helped us to stay afloat. We also received funds from the Federal Government. But we cannot count on those things happening this year. And so we are hoping that those of you who are able will boost your Stewardship Sunday contribution to help us make up for the shortfall of funds. If it is helpful for you to spread that increased amount over the next couple of months that is most acceptable and there are three envelopes in the letter you received this past week.

If you have not already done so, please take this moment to fill out one envelope and indicate the total amount of your gift either one time or spread out over three months. Please place that envelope in the basket at the doors of the church as you leave today.

My friends, I am most grateful to you for the generous support you bestow upon Saint Anthony's. May the Lord continue to bless you with his abundant graces and may we all grow in true gratitude for what Jesus has come to offer each and everyone one of us. Life with him forever in his Father's kingdom. True heaven. May his generosity inspire our own generous response.