

HOMILY 25TH Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 20, 2026

[Pass out money to several people.] Those of you who got a dollar, do you feel a little cheated? Why didn't I get \$5 or \$10? And what about the rest of you? What about the people who did not get anything? Are you wondering why they got the money? What if I told you I gave money to the people who I think did a really good job volunteering? What about the many people who volunteer and did not get anything? Are you wondering what they did, that was so special? What if I told you that the people I gave money to would be unable to eat today without the money? Would you be thinking I know they can afford food. Fr. Jim is getting scammed. All of the negative feelings you may be feeling come from comparing yourselves to others. And all you really know is that I passed out money. You may be creating some scenarios in your head as to why, but you would be just making that up.

In the Gospel reading today, a vineyard owner hired people to work in his vineyard 5 different times during the day and he paid all of them the usual daily wage. The people who worked from the early morning were unhappy because they thought they deserved more because they worked longer. They were only unhappy because they were comparing themselves to others and thought it was not fair. But they were not cheated. They got what they bargained for. And all we know is how long the people worked. Maybe the people who started work at 5:00 did work that was much more difficult and worth more. And day laborers were not among the affluent in that culture. The usual daily wage was just what they need to provide for their family for one day. Maybe the vineyard owner was generous and made sure all the workers were taken care of. The lessons of the parable are that it is not helpful to compare ourselves with others, because we really do not know what is going on with them. And it is not so important when they begin working but that they answer the call.

I think most of us have noticed all the negativity in our country today. Just look at the news on TV, or all the postings on social media, or the way people frequently treat each other

in public settings. There is so much negativity and contempt and hatred. Maybe we are comparing ourselves to others that we observe, and this gives us license for bad behavior. Or maybe we compare ourselves to others and think my behavior is not that bad. I have never heard anyone say I am so happy that we have all the divisions, all the contempt and all the hatred we have in our country today. It sounds ridiculous when I say it but that is the reality. Maybe instead of comparing ourselves with others we should decide what we would like to see in our country today and then behave accordingly. We can perpetuate negative, or we can model more positive behavior. We can each be part of making our country a better place.

It is never helpful to compare ourselves with others because we never really know what is going on with other people. Maybe we should spend less time judging others and creating divisions and spend more time listening to other people's stories. When we do that, we frequently find that we have more in common than we thought. We are all at different places on our spiritual journey. It is not as important when you turn to the Lord but that you do answer his call and do his will. If you are not happy with where you are spiritually right now, you can change courses today. Many parents have told me that they are disappointed that their children are not practicing the faith. Your job as a parent is to give your children the foundations of their faith and that will always be there. At some point we need to decide if it is our parent's faith or own it as our faith. I have talked to a number of people who are coming back to the church in their 60's and 70's at least partially because their parents gave them that foundation in the faith. I am just glad to hear they are back.

It is not helpful to compare ourselves with others because we are all unique and have a different combination of graces and burdens. Each of us has a unique story. God will not judge us based upon how we do in comparison with others. God sees who we are and who we have the potential to become.