

## Commissioning of Confirmation Candidates/CSA Giving Day

[Readings: Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145; Philip 1:20c-24, 27a; Matt 20:1-16a]

[All Masses:] When Jesus tells a parable, he often tells a zinger of a story. Today is no exception. Almost anyone would admit that today's parable is both irritating and puzzling. Why does the landowner pay everyone the same wage regardless of how long they have worked? If I worked the full day, wouldn't I think that I deserved more pay than those who worked only one hour? Wouldn't YOU? Of course, we would! And wouldn't we feel a little irritated and wonder what Jesus is up to, maybe even wonder what He might be teaching us?

Each worker had an agreement with the landowner – one day's wage. Others were told they would get a just wage. If they all had this understanding, why can't the owner do what he wants, pay what he wants, as long as he is just?

It's never too early. It's never too late. Maybe the thoughts of Jesus are not our thoughts. Isaiah says that in today's First Reading: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways." As a friend of mine says, "I've learned that things happen by God's Rolex, not my Timex!" This parable has nothing to do with work and wages. It has to do with faith. The Jewish people have lived and taught and waited for the coming of the Messiah and the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth. They have been faithful to their culture and tradition for thousands of years --"dawn." But many still are not ready, willing or able to accept the Good News that Jesus brings.

So Jesus offers salvation to the Gentiles – those who have come along at "nine o'clock," "noon," "three o'clock" and "five o'clock." Those who arrive later on the scene. It's never too early. It's never too late.

Are you grateful for the graces and forgiveness God gives us, even when you don't "deserve" them? Do you resent the mercy shown others because they don't "deserve" it? All of us are equally dependent on God's generosity and love. God's love and generosity cannot be matched or outdone. Our only response, our only option, once we choose to become a Christian believer, is stewardship. Stewardship is what we do with what we have when we believe and love God.

And yet we often find it easy to complain because of what we perceive we don't have, or that someone has more than us or should get less. It's never too early. It's never too late. When we stop to think of it this way, there is another twist to the Gospel parable. Some of us were called by Jesus in our infancy and we have been faithful followers. Others were called in our youth, while still others of us received our spiritual awakening or re-awakening in our maturity, even in our old age. It's never too early. It's never too late.

No matter when Jesus called us to be His disciples, we all know others who were called later on in their lives. Should the reward be any different for any of these disciples of Jesus depending on when they answered His call?

If I lived a sinful and reckless life during the first half of my life and then lived a virtuous life the second half, should I receive less love from the Lord? Perhaps you know someone who lived such a life and now is a faithful Catholic. Should he or she be loved less, have a lesser salvation from God? God isn't like that. "So high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above yours."

That is what Jesus is telling us. God's love and salvation are available to all people, no matter when they see the light, when they seek the Lord for the first time for themselves, when they let go of the ways of the scoundrel and sinner. For it isn't by our own merit that we receive God's mercy and love; it is by the sheer generosity and grace of God's love. It is free, generous and amazing.

[5 PM Mass only:] This weekend we enroll our young people preparing for Confirmation. You who are candidates, this is a challenging time in your lives. Too old to be cute little kids and too young to be considered full-grown adults. And – Spoiler Alert – Confirmation doesn't make you an "adult" in the Church! If it did, you would be able to vote, drive a car and join the military! Confirmation is this -- your personal choice to be, to become and to live out the Catholic faith.

I challenge you this year to discover two important things: who you really are, and what GOD wants you to be when you grow up! Spoiler Alert Number Two: You are called to become a servant of the Lord.

Our Second Reading says that when we live, we live for the Lord, and when we die, we die for the Lord. Find your place in the Church now! Today!

The fullness of the Holy Spirit that we will pray for you on the day of your Confirmation will fill your soul with a new purpose, a new meaning for your life. Become an altar server, a lector, a member of our music ministry.

When it may seem more convenient to stay home on the weekend, remember that you are called to worship with us every Sunday and Holy Day. As you come to the Table of the Lord, realize that He is truly present, loving you and living inside of you when you receive Him. Come and be nourished, then go out to make Jesus Christ known and visible in the world. To your family, to your classmates, to your friends.

Pray. Talk with God daily. Give God five minutes when you wake up and five minutes before you go to bed. Talk to Jesus throughout the day as you would with a good friend. Come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

[*All Masses:*] Today, throughout the country, is Catechetical Sunday. a day to honor all who teach and learn the Catholic Faith. The 2020 Catechetical Sunday theme is taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "***I Received from the Lord what I also Handed on to You.***" This theme focuses on the essential work of catechesis, which is an invitation to a whole new life given by Christ Himself. This weekend, we commission and bless our catechists and all parents, who are called to be "the first and the best" teachers of the Faith for their children. Our Faith Formation and sacramental prep sessions will be virtual within the approved guidelines. We inaugurated this with a Zoom meeting of our catechists and me.

Some catechists tell me that it's the hardest job in the world, like being thrown into the lion's den every week as a parish steward. Do you know what a parish volunteer is? One person describes it as someone who couldn't get away fast enough before getting caught and trapped!

Others describe it as a blessing, delving deeper and deeper into our relationship with Jesus and with the beauty that is the Catholic Church. The gift of teaching our children and preparing the future Church that will one day replace us all.

One catechist said, “Like most catechists, I plan careful lessons, spend far too much time creating original props I can’t find in any catalog, and watch each week as plans to teach the heck out of some religious concept get derailed by factors beyond my control. I’ve finally determined the only good lesson plan boils down to One Big Idea. If I just say one thing across the hour -- write it, say it, make them repeat it, sing it, dance it -- with any grace it may stick, and students will learn it by heart. Find One Big Idea.

And finally, two things are happening this Thursday. First is a new CSA invitation to EVERYONE to make a difference. The secular world has “Giving Tuesday,” on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving Day. For the first time ever, the Archdiocese of Detroit is going to designate one day next week, when we hope everyone in every parish will make their gift or pledge to the CSA. Tune in at **6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 24** on the Archdiocese of Detroit web page, Facebook and YouTube channels, to our **first ever CSA Giving Day!** When you give this Thursday, you can choose where your gift or pledge will go! To any of the seven key ministries in the Archdiocese of Detroit: Vocations, Catholic Schools, Black Catholic Ministries, Hispanic Ministries, Youth and Family Ministries, Christian Services, and Communications.

We’ve never done this before, but we have faith that we can “Rise and Be Not Afraid” to reach our parish goal of \$77,101. We give thanks to God ahead of time for your support for our mission. May God bless us and may God bless the CSA! It’s never too early, it’s never too late.

The second thing that is happening this Thursday is a call to fast and pray.

For a single day, on Sept. 24, Fr. John Riccardo and his ACTS XXIX team want the entire country to stop what they’re doing and pray. The nation, torn by political and civil unrest, division and acrimony, desperately needs it, he contends. The grassroots idea for this came from none other than President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, in his great wisdom, had led the country in days of prayer, fasting and humiliation three times over the course of the Civil War.

“What particularly struck me was not only that he called for (this day) and the language that he used was very Christian, but also the fact that he was

calling the whole country to do this on a particular day,” Fr. Riccardo told *Detroit Catholic*. “So, rather than an ongoing call to pray every Wednesday for the rest of our lives, let’s have the whole country, all men and women of goodwill, pray for a day.” As the country remains ever more divided, only God can heal the hearts of men and women torn by division, which is necessary for true peace and unity, Fr. Riccardo said.

Lincoln called for the first of these days in 1861 on the last Thursday of September. Although not trying to carbon copy Lincoln’s proclamation, Fr. Riccardo decided to put out a similar call for prayer and fasting on the last Thursday of September 2020. Fr. Riccardo added that Sep. 24 used to be the feast of Our Lady of Ransom, also known as Our Lady of Mercy.

“It was dedicated to Mary, Our Lady of Ransom, because her son is the one who ransoms us or rescues us from captivity,” Fr. Riccardo said.

The country and the Church today are at an important crossroads, just as they were in Lincoln’s day, Fr. Riccardo believes. In order to solve problems, it’s critical to take them first to God in prayer, he said.

The nationwide day of prayer and fasting is an invitation to everyone — Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and even atheists “who are willing to conceive there might be a God” — to join together in one mind, Fr. Riccardo said.

“We are at a place right now in the country where clearly we are going through tremendous upheaval — in the Church, in the culture, politically — there are cries of injustice and a need for unity and healing,” Fr. Riccardo said.

The problem, Fr. Riccardo said, is in our hearts.

“Politics and law and public policies are very important, but they can’t fix the problem, they can’t fix the heart. Only God can fix the heart,” he said. “In the history of the Church, what God does so often is to turn people who once were enemies not simply into people who can tolerate each other, but who can love each other and call each other brother and sister.”

To be Christian is to believe God acts in history, Fr. Riccardo added.

God acts in history and will continue to do so, Fr. Riccardo said. “He became man to rescue us, and His acts in history are not over. We are asking Him to act again right now,” he said. We are really trying to make it open to all men and women of goodwill.”

Participation might look different depending on a person’s religious affiliation and background, but Fr. Riccardo suggests Catholics consider praying at 3 p.m., the Hour of Mercy. “What would it be like if we could somehow hear and feel one another’s knees around the country hit the ground at the same time on that day, begging God for mercy, healing and conversion?” he said.

“Republicans, Democrats and Independents can set aside this day to fast until dinner and to ask for two very specific things in our prayers: for God’s mercy on our country and for the healing and conversion of our hearts,” he said.

For more information about the National Day of Prayer and Fasting or to help spread the word, [visit the ACTS XXIX website](#). AMEN!