

***Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time (English Mass)***  
***Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)***  
***October 1, 2023***  
***Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“The Lord’s way is not fair!” (Ezekiel 18:25)*

How often have we heard someone express their feeling of either being treated unfairly or witnessing another likewise being treated unfairly? The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel echoes the words of God as He repeats what His children, Israel, are saying about Him. In essence, God is not fair in the way He treats His children. This accusation made by Israel deserves our attention. As we witness the sufferings of others or experience suffering ourselves, we will often find ourselves questioning God. No matter the time or place, humanity has asked the same proverbial question: “Why does God allow some to suffer while others He blesses?” Generally, we further qualify our question by designating between those we deem as good and those we deem as bad. By our perception, God does appear to be unfair in what He allows to take place within all of our lives. All this being stated, we ask ourselves: “Is God FAIR?”

I ask another question which, by its own answer, will answer for us the question concerning the fairness of God. Is LIFE fair? I am confident we can all agree life is not fair. We respond this way because we know some are gifted with talents and abilities that others do not possess. Our understanding of “fairness” is subjective, meaning based upon our understanding of particular subjects or situations. Applying my Christian belief that “all things come from the Hand of God,” then God is not fair for He gives to all gifts, talents and abilities which are particular to the individual. God is not fair, but, turning toward a more important question, is He JUST?

We begin by clearly stating what it means to be “Just.” The Catholic Church defines the virtue of Justice to mean: Giving to another their just due. We believe God is the perfection of what it is to be Just. Returning to the prophet Ezekiel, the children question how can God be Just if He allows injustice to afflict His family? Worded differently, how can God be the Just, Loving Father when He allows His children to suffer injustice at the hands of others and, in many cases, the consequences of their own choices?

To assist us in our understanding of this question, it may be best to acknowledge that many will attempt to understand this question through the prism of their own experiences of injustice. I experience Injustice, similar to my feelings of Fairness, and therefore I conclude that God is not Just. Have you noticed what we have done here? We have again shifted the focus away from God and onto ourselves. God is or is not . . . , because I have experienced . . . I have made the answer to the question more about me and my perception as opposed to who God truly is. You may remember our Deacon’s homily from last weekend when he related the story of a conversation concerning the parable of Jesus involving the workers and their payment. I will confess now, that parable is not one of my personal favorites. I must state this for it directly impacts my understanding of Justice and how I will conclude this reflection today. I propose this for your reflection for the upcoming week.

Instead of reading this parable and immediately associating the person of the landowner with God, which assumes that you and I are the workers. What if we turn it around and say that you and I are the landowners. We flitter from one location to another in our thoughts similar to the landowner who leaves and returns looking for someone else, something new. We are the ones who hold the purse strings of our attention, emotions, interests and love. Now, let us place both God and the desires of the world as the workers. Since God is eternal, He has been there working quietly in the fields from the earliest moments of our lives. Instead of being satisfied with His progress, we seek out other people or things which we believe will work better in the fields. And, as the day grows long, meaning at various stages of our lives, we choose to open the wallets of our hearts and give out our payments of love. Sadly, we have, each one here, paid the hourly desires of pleasure the same tokens of love as God who has so diligently been present to us. And, similar to the landowner, when God questions us as to why we offer created things the love, our love, that He justly deserves, we respond with a similar answer: "Friend, it is my heart, my love, I am free to give it as I so choose." We are not just; we are not fair. But, He still is. For instead of giving to us what we truly deserve, what is truly just for us, He chooses to extend His Mercy toward us. He allows His Mercy, His Love for us, to over-shadow His Justice. If we were working 8 to 10 hours in a job and received the same payment as one who only worked 1 hour, then most of us would not return to work the next day. We treat God unjustly many times throughout our day, week, or month, and He still returns each day, no matter what hour we call His name because He is Just, He is Fair, He is Love, He is God and He is our Father.