



Have you thought?

Equality or Equity?

How would you feel if you had done a full day's work and were paid the same as someone who had only worked for one hour? Is the landowner in the parable being unjust? He pays the workers exactly what he promised them – but he promised everyone the same amount, regardless of when they started work. The workers who started at 6.00 am complain. How do you think the workers who started later in the day felt? The landowner claims the right to be generous – is generosity unfair? There is a difference between treating people equally and equitably. What has the landowner done here?

Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement

The 2023-2024 Social Justice Statement from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has been released.

Entitled *Listen, Learn Love: A New Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, the Statement calls "all the People of God to embrace a new engagement...which involves a commitment to listen to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers and to learn from them".

The Statement can be downloaded from our website by visiting bit.ly/3OMAKFn.

For those without internet access who may wish to obtain a copy, please contact the Parish Office who will happily print a copy for you.

Sacraments of Initiation for Children

All the online modules are now available any for children wishing to complete their journey to full Christian Initiation. Enrolment into the process is as simple as filling out an online form available on the Parishes' website—visit bit.ly/3NuMAv7 for all the details.

For children who might not yet be baptised, or who were baptised in other church traditions, the journey is slightly different and will require some additional steps. The best place to start a conversation about this is by contacting Fr Andrew.

Please pass this information on to anyone who might find it helpful.

Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Marriage Tribunal

Can we help you? The Church is aware of the stresses with marriage breakdown and divorce, and understands that many people have questions about the processes which might allow a divorced person to remarry in the Catholic Church. If you have any questions or would like to have a confidential chat about your situation, please contact Jane at the Tribunal on 4979 1370.

The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford recognize we stand upon the traditional country of Gringai clan of the Worimi people, who have walked upon and cared for this country for thousands of years.

We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and deep spiritual attachment and relationship to this country. We pay our respects to their Elders—past, present, and emerging—and commit ourselves to working together for reconciliation and justice.

Homily by Richard Leonard SJ

The film *Forrest Gump* was once described as the 'battler's triumph'. On one level it was about how the last will be first. This story picks up where the film left off.

Forrest Gump dies and goes to heaven. On arrival St Peter informs him that there are three questions he has to answer before he can enter.

- 1) What days of the week begin with the letter T?
- 2) How many seconds are there in a year?
- 3) What is God's first name?

Forrest answers straight away, 'Shucks, there are two days in the week beginning with the letter T - Today and Tomorrow.' St Peter replies,

'That's not what I was thinking, but you have a point. How about the next one?' 'I think the only answer can be twelve.' 'Twelve?' St Peter asks. 'Shucks, there's gotta be twelve: January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd. . . .' 'Hold it', interrupts St Peter, 'I see where you're going with this. Let's go to the final question.' 'Sure', says Forrest, it's Andy!' 'Andy?' exclaims an exasperated St Peter. 'OK, I can understand how you came up with your answers to my first two questions, but just how in the world did you come up with Andy as God's first name?' 'Shucks, that was the easiest one of all', Forrest replied. 'I learned it from the hymn . . . ANDY walks with me, ANDY talks with me, ANDY tells me I am his own.' St Peter opened the pearly gates and yelled, 'Run Forrest, run!'

In today's Gospel, in which the first labourers are paid the same wage as the afternoon workers, what the early birds didn't reckon on was that they could have come much later and got the same deal.

We would cynically call the afternoon workers, 'Johnny-come-latelies' and chances are if we were confronted with the same situation we would be with the complainers.

This story was important to the early Church because generations of Jews waited and longed for the Messiah and, like the first workers, they were the first to respond to the call of Jesus and to work in the field of his Kingdom. For some of the early Jewish-Christians, including St Peter, it came as a surprise that the Lord was calling Gentiles to the life and work of Jesus' Kingdom as well.

We can imagine that it rankled some of the early birds to see these Johnny-come-latelies taking charge of the Christian mission. This wasn't how it was supposed to be!

This story, then, is a wonderful commentary on how fickle we are and, luckily for us, how extraordinarily generous God is. What we see in ourselves and others is only a glimpse of what

God is like. God is so much more: more loving; more forgiving; more compassionate; and more just.

And because God is so much greater than anything we could ask or imagine, we are constantly surprised at how he turns our expectations, our fears and predictions upside down. We constantly look for God in the big and spectacular and he comes to us poor, naked, sick, in prison and hungry. God speaks through the most surprising people at the most surprising times.

That's why those people who have decided that God can only work in certain ways, places, people, institutions and times so often end up at the end of the line when it comes to religious wisdom. Michael McGirr in his excellent book, *Things You Get for Free* argues that there is a crisis of belief today, but that it's not the way we often think. In a brilliant turning of the tables, McGirr says that the crisis of belief is that people inside the Church sometimes cannot believe that people outside its traditional structures can experience the love of Jesus. God loves and guides the Church, but is not bound by it. God is busy about making sure those who might be last have a chance to come in first.

Rather than resent this, however, let's thank God for being bigger than we are and for being just to all of us, no matter when, or how, we get the Word.

© Richard Leonard SJ

Richard Leonard SJ is the Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and a film critic for all the major Australian Catholic newspapers. He completed a PhD in cinema studies at the University of Melbourne. He lectures in cinema and theology at the Jesuit College of Spirituality and has been a visiting lecturer in Australian cinema at the University of Melbourne, a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA and is visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has lectured widely and is the author of numerous books.



The Parish Diary (for the week ahead)

25th Week in Ordinary Time

Monday 25 September

Tuesday 26 September

Wednesday 27 September

Memorial of St Vincent de Paul

Thursday 28 September

Friday 29 September

Feast of Sts Michael, Gabriel, Raphael

Saturday 30 September

Memorial of St Jerome

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday 1 October

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Isaiah 55:6-9

Psalm Psalm 144
The Lord is near to all who call him.

2nd Reading Philippians 1:20-24, 27

Acclamation cf Acts 16:14

Alleluia, alleluia!

Open our hearts, O Lord,
to listen to the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 20:1-16

Memorial Acclamation

We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

Morning Tea at Clarence Town

The next morning tea at Clarence Town will be held after the 8am Mass next Sunday (1 October). Please bring a plate to share, and join us for good food, good company, and good conversation.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for September:

"We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance."

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding: by phoning 4979 1390 or emailing childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au.

Visit the Office of Safeguarding website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Labourers for hire

Jesus' parable describes a situation that would have been very familiar to his audience. At the time, there were many quite wealthy landowners who controlled large vineyards, orchards and crop fields. They would have employed a certain number of permanent workers but come harvest time there was a need for more workers and, much like today, they sought to employ part time workers for a short period of time until the rush was over. Men looking for work would gather in the marketplace of a village and landowners would select workers and send them to their property to work.

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In September: Annie & Brian Maurer, Peggy Brennan, Godfrey Barry, Tony O'Hearn, Fr Brian Quillinan, Pat Byron, Marjory Neilson, Ivy Hinton, Arthur Sonter, Ron Neilson, Fr Peter Quirk, Tony & Mary Maurer, Kath Morrow, Frances Amy Young, Rowland Young and Dennis Melmouth, Dot Shurrey, Mary Moylan, Norm Barham, Eileen Godwin, Warren Trappel, Lachlan Tindall (Clarence Town), Brian Byron, Margaret Moule, John Melmeth, Beryl Cooper, Paul Evans.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Daphne Bond, Maree McCulloch, Leonie Young, Lisa Reid, Bev Herbert, Denise Wenden, Warren Wade, Irene Robinson, Ray Tonkin (Qld), Luke Barry, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, Brian Holstein, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Bella Duggan, Ella Rusak, Peter Byron, Peter Rooke, Graham McCarthy, Matthew Kerr.