

Father O'Connor's Homily for 20 September 2026
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Sunday – A
Weekend One: Introduction to Stewardship Renewal

Isaiah 55: 6-9
Philippians 1: 20c-24, 27a
Matthew 20: 1-16a

This weekend we begin our Annual Stewardship Renewal in our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes with its theme, “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3: 10).

Didn't we just have a “Stewardship Renewal”? Yes we did, exactly one year ago.

Why do we do this every year? Because we remember things that are important to us every year, like birthdays and anniversaries. They deserve our notice.

As a steward of God's bountiful blessings, I acknowledge that all that I have is a gift from God: my very life itself – from the moment I was conceived in my mother's womb until the Lord calls me home – my time, my talents and my treasure. Everything that I have – including my next breath – is a gift from God.

God wants me to receive these gifts from Him gratefully, to develop them with an increase and, because of my gratitude, to share a portion of them generously with others, so that each person gives as they have been blessed and each person receives as they need.

Stewardship as a way of life is all about growing as disciples of Jesus: being ready to say to Him regularly: “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.”

I am grateful to our Stewardship Council, under the leadership of Jim and Lynda Pecchio, for all that they do year-round to help all of us, in both of our parishes, to grow in our discipleship.

Because of their ministry, you will be receiving a stewardship packet in the mail. Please watch for it. It contains: (1) a letter from me; (2) a “Ministries Catalog” which describes each of the current ministries in our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes as well as listing a contact person; most of the ministries are available for members of both of our parishes to participate in; (3) and a “2026 Commitment Card” specially marked for each parish that enables each household to check off ministry involvements

that they would like to join for one year or that they would like to renew for another year.

Next weekend, 26-27 September, at all the Masses I will offer a very short homily and it will be followed by a fellow parishioner who will give a witness talk about how they are implementing stewardship more fully in their personal lives.

The following weekend, 3-4 October, is our Annual Stewardship Commitment Sunday. You will be asked to bring your completed commitment cards to Mass with your one-year commitments of your time, talent and treasure. And we will place them in the Offertory basket together.

So, over the next two weeks, let us pray for each other as we discern how the Lord is calling us to use and share our time and talent and treasure over the next twelve months.

And now a little reflection on today's Scriptures.

Isaiah the Prophet, in today's First Reading, has this for us to hear. And God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts."

God doesn't always operate in the ways we expect, and today's Gospel is a case in point.

A landowner goes out to hire workers for his vineyard at the crack of dawn and promises to give them the usual daily wage. He goes out again for workers at 9:00, again at Noon, again at 3:00, and once more at 5:00. And quitting time is 6:00. And then they ALL get the same pay.

Some of the workers object: "We've worked a 12-hour shift, and these one-hour workers got the same pay as we did! It's not fair!"

Perhaps that is how we feel when we listen to this Gospel. It just doesn't seem fair.

The landowner answers, "Yes, you worked the whole day. And what did I promise to pay you? The usual daily wage. You got what I promised. Are you envious because I am generous?"

"My thoughts are not always your thoughts and your ways are not always my ways," the Lord God says to us. This is a parable about God's justice and about God's mercy.

The people in the parable that worked the whole day were treated with God's justice. They got what they were promised. The rest of them, who

did not put in a full day's work but got a full day's pay, were treated with God's mercy. After all, they had families to support and bills to pay just like the other workers did.

We can stand back and admire that landowner for doing this. But if we are ever in a situation where we feel that we really worked hard, and somebody else, who did less, was being equally paid, we can understand the anger and the resentment there.

But what if Jesus had ended this parable a little differently? What if, instead of starting with those who had only worked one hour, that landowner began by paying the people who worked the full day? They would have gotten the promised daily wage, and promptly left. They probably would never have known that those who worked fewer hours were receiving the same pay.

Isn't that how we are from time to time? "Oh, I'm grateful for my blessings! I really am" – until I find out that somebody, whom I consider less-deserving, seems to be blessed more than me. "What? It isn't fair!"

We like it when other people are blessed, as long as we believe that we are a little more blessed. "Isn't it nice that God was good to them ... the poor dears!" But we can be threatened if someone is blessed in a way that we think should have been coming to us.

That is what our most merciful God does, all the time. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts," says the Lord.

Think about it. How has God done something like that for you? Blessed you beyond your expectations? And how many times? And "although you, God, have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift" [Common Preface IV].

What an awesome and merciful God we are privileged to serve. As the hymn text puts it so well:

Our God is an awesome God.
He reigns from heaven above,
With wisdom, power and love.
Our God is an awesome God.
[Richard W. Mullins]