



## **25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Homily**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
Sunday, 21 September 2014

There is a passage in one of the letters of St Paul which often comes to my mind, especially when I read Gospel passages like the one we have just heard. It is a very challenging passage and one that we would often prefer not to focus on too much. But I want to remind us all of it today because I think it can help us make sense of today's Gospel.

The passage comes from St Paul's letter to the Romans (Chapter 12, verse 2). St Paul says to the community to whom he is writing, and he says the same to us today, of course, that we should adapt ourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world but, rather, we should let our minds be remade and our human nature transformed, for it is in this way that we will be really acceptable to God.

St Paul is reminding us that the values and habits and ways of thinking common in our society, the patterns of this present world, are not necessarily always capable of drawing us closer to God, making us more truly human, and allowing us to be the people God has created us to be. As Christians, of course, we do not believe that the only way to love God is to turn our backs on all the good things of our world. On the contrary, we believe that God's Creation is good, and the gifts of the world are given to us by God to use and enjoy. We do believe, though, that, as fallible human beings, we can easily lose our balance and our sense of perspective, and begin to give too much importance to the things that don't really matter, while we ignore those that do.

Another way of saying this is that Christians are called to see with the eyes of Jesus, not the eyes of those who have no time for Jesus; we are called to listen with the ears of Jesus, not the ears of those who allow their lives to be filled with trivial distractions; and that we are called to love with the heart of Jesus, not the heart of those who are more focused on themselves than on others.

As we begin to do this, we will understand what the phrase from the first reading (Isaiah 5:6-9) means when it reminds us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways. As we see things more fully as God sees them, we begin to realise how much we have been missing before!

Jesus makes this very clear in today's parable (Matthew 20:1-16a). As we listen to it, we are invited to place ourselves in the position of the workers who were hired at the start of the day



and promised a certain wage for their day's work. Because others were hired through the course of the day and paid the amount promised to those who had been there all day, those who had worked all day long presumed they would be given more - after all, they had laboured long and hard and deserved more than those who had only started a few hours earlier. There is a logic in that, and many of us would be inclined to sympathise with these workers. It seems, in fact, to be a matter of fairness, even of justice. That is until we realise that God operates with a different logic. We want to follow a logic of strict justice, as we understand it, while God wants to act with the logic of generosity. "Why should you be envious," the landowner says to the workers, "simply because I choose to be generous?"

The words of the first reading strike home again - God's ways are not our ways and God's thoughts are not our thoughts. We would want to act in one way - but God acts very differently.

We see the same thing in the importance Jesus gives to the quality of forgiveness in our lives as Christians. When Peter once asked Jesus how many times he, Peter, should forgive a brother or sister who had hurt him, Peter suggested, very generously he thought, that he would be prepared to forgive as many as seven times. Jesus' reply astonished him. "Not seven times," Jesus said, "but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). What Jesus was saying, of course, is that there is never a time when we should refuse to forgive - and why? Because that is the way God deals with us. Unfortunately, it is not always the way we deal with each other. Once again, we see how challenging it is to "adapt ourselves no longer to this present world but to let our minds be remade".

This is why our spiritual life, and especially our weekly celebration of the Eucharist, is so important. We cannot, in fact, remake our own minds - but God can. He can shape and mould our minds and our hearts into copies of the mind and heart of Jesus - and He does it through the gift of Jesus Himself whose Word we listen to at Mass and whose Body and Blood we receive in Holy Communion. We become one with Jesus more completely each time we celebrate the Eucharist and He begins to live in us more and more deeply so that we do see with His eyes, and listen with His ears and love with His heart. In the end, this is what our faith is all about.

The God we believe in, the God revealed to us by Jesus, is a God of extraordinary generosity, forgiveness and compassion. As Christians, we are called to allow God to be present in the world through us - through our generosity, our forgiveness and our compassion. Then, we will be, as Pope Francis has called us to be, a Church, a community, which heals broken lives and warms cold hearts.