

The Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Dominica XXV “per annum”

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The labourers in the vineyard and the goodness of the householder:
a study of the proper in three interpretations

Contents

A Full Day’s Wage for One Hour’s Work	2
The Appointed Texts	4
Each Element in Its Setting	7
One Wage across the Ages: The Day as the History of Salvation	11
Seek the Lord While He May Be Found: The Day as a Human Life	16
Because I Am Good: The Wage as Gift and the Giver as Reward	20
The Three Interpretations Compared	25
Scriptural Date and Location	26
Appendix: Liturgical Resolution	28
Appendix: Scope and Qualifications	29
References	30

A Full Day's Wage for One Hour's Work

At the centre of this Sunday's Mass stands a parable that ends in a complaint and a question. A householder goes out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard and agrees with them "for a penny a day", the *denarius* of the Latin text. He goes out again about the third hour, the sixth and the ninth, promising "what shall be just", and once more about the eleventh. When evening comes the steward pays the last first, and every man receives a denarius. Those who came at dawn murmur: "These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats." The householder answers one of them: "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" The Lord concludes: "So shall the last be first and the first last."

Scripture is quoted throughout in the Douay–Rheims version as revised by Bishop Challoner, a public-domain study translation made from the Latin Vulgate. It is not the text proclaimed at Mass: the English heard in the celebration is that of the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, which alone is the approved wording. Psalms are numbered as the Lectionary numbers them, with the Vulgate number, which the Douay–Rheims and the Latin books use, in parentheses.

Around the parable stand texts of other books and other ages: the antiphons and prayers that the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, gives under the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, *Dominica XXV "per annum"*, and the readings of Year A, no. 133 of the *Lectionary for Mass*. In the first reading Isaiah cries, "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found", and promises the sinner who returns a God "bountiful to forgive"; the reason he gives is the sentence "my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways". The psalm answers that the Lord is "gracious and merciful", "just in all his ways" and "nigh unto all them that call upon him". In the second reading Paul, a prisoner, weighs death, which would bring him to Christ, against life, which means "the fruit of labour" for his churches, and judges that to remain "is needful for you". Before the Gospel the assembly asks the Lord to open its heart, in a verse adapted from the story of Lydia, the first convert at Philippi. The Missal's own texts, which serve this Sunday in all three years of the cycle, frame the readings with a promise and three petitions: an oracle in which the Lord names himself the salvation of his people, a Collect that rests the whole law on the love of God and of neighbour, a prayer that what faith professes the sacrament may give, and a prayer that the effect of redemption be held in the mysteries and in conduct. At Communion the Missal offers either the psalmist's wish that his ways be directed to keep the commandments or the Good Shepherd's word that he knows his own.

The *Ordo lectionum Missae* marks what it singles out in each reading by the title it sets over it. Over the first reading stands *Non sunt cogitationes meae cogitationes vestrae* (Isa 55:8); over the Gospel, *An oculus tuus nequam est, quia ego bonus sum?* (Mt 20:15); over the second reading, *Mihi vivere Christus est* (Phil 1:21). Its introduction explains that in Ordinary Time the Old Testament reading is chosen for its relation to the Gospel and that the titles show the relation, while the Apostle and the Gospel are each read in their own semi-continuous course (*Praenotanda* 105–107). The Lectionary thus sets God's thoughts, which are not ours, beside the householder's question about his own goodness. The letter to the Philippians begins on this Sunday a course of four Sundays.

The Sunday's question is therefore what kind of justice pays the last as the first, and what the complaint against it reveals. The Fathers and Doctors who expounded these passages answer along three lines, and each line, carried through every text of the Mass, yields an interpretation of the whole. The first takes the householder's day as the history of salvation: God has called labourers from the first just man to the last, Israel through the long day and the nations at its end, and gives them all the one wage of eternal life. The second takes the day as a single human life: God calls at every age, the late comer is truly received, and because no one knows the length of his day no one may put off the call. The third begins from the evening and the householder's reply: what the last receive is a gift, the first are wronged in nothing, and the wage

is finally the giver himself. What each interpretation's witnesses say of their own passages supplies it: the parable, the prophecy, the two psalms, the letter, the story of Lydia and the discourse of the shepherd. None of these witnesses expounds this Mass as a whole. All the appointed elements have a place in each interpretation, and four senses of its own, literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical, close each. The three hold much in common.

The appointed elements at a glance

Element	Text and reference	What it says
Entrance Antiphon	<i>Salus populi ego sum</i> ; a composed text whose basis the official Antiphonary identifies as Ps 37 (36):39–40, though the Missal prints no locator	The Lord names himself the salvation of the people, promises to hear them from whatever tribulation they cry out of, and declares himself their Lord for ever.
Collect	<i>Deus, qui sacrae legis omnia constituta</i>	The address rests all that the sacred law lays down on the love of God and of neighbour; the petition is that those who keep God's precepts may reach eternal life.
First Reading	Isa 55:6–9	Seek the Lord while he may be found; let the wicked return, for God is bountiful to forgive; his thoughts and ways are as far above ours as heaven above earth.
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 145 (144):2–3, 8–9, 17–18; response from v. 18a	Daily praise of the Lord's greatness; the Lord gracious, merciful and patient, sweet to all; just in all his ways and near to all who call on him in truth.
Second Reading	Phil 1:20c–24, 27a	Christ will be magnified in Paul's body by life or by death; to live is Christ and to die is gain; he is torn between the two and stays for his people's sake; let their life be worthy of the Gospel.
Alleluia verse	<i>Aperi, Domine, cor nostrum</i> ; cf. Acts 16:14b, an adaptation	A petition that the Lord open our heart to heed the words of his Son, formed from the account of Lydia's conversion.
Gospel	Mt 20:1–16a	The labourers hired at five hours of the day and paid alike; the murmuring of the first; the householder's reply; the last first and the first last.
Prayer over the Offerings	<i>Munera, quaesumus, Domine, tuae plebis</i>	God is asked to accept his people's gifts, so that what they profess in faith they may lay hold of through the heavenly sacraments.
Communion Antiphon, first option	<i>Tu mandasti mandata tua custodiri nimis</i> ; Ps 119 (118):4–5	God has commanded his commandments to be kept most diligently; the speaker wishes that his ways be directed to keep them.
Communion Antiphon, second option	<i>Ego sum pastor bonus</i> ; Jn 10:14	"I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me."
Prayer after Communion	<i>Quos tuis, Domine, reficis sacramentis</i>	Those whom God restores with his sacraments are commended to his continual help, that they may possess the effect of redemption both in the mysteries and in their conduct.

The two Communion antiphons are alternatives: the Missal prints the second under *Vel*, and one of them is used. Every other element is required. The formulary has no Sequence, Offertory antiphon, proper Preface, prayer over the people or solemn blessing, and the Lectionary gives no shorter form of the Gospel.

The Appointed Texts

The Missal's texts for this Sunday are those of *Dominica XXV "per annum"* in the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (2002), which the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, renders for the dioceses of the United States; the readings, psalm and Alleluia verse are those of no. 133 of the *Lectionary for Mass*, which follows the *Ordo lectionum Missae* of 1981. The Latin of the Missal, the approved English of the Missal and the approved English of the Lectionary are all under copyright, and none of them is reproduced here. Each biblical element is given at its canonical verses in the Douay–Rheims version as revised by Bishop Challoner, which translates the Clementine Vulgate and numbers the psalms as the Vulgate does. That English is a study text and is not the wording proclaimed at Mass. Words printed in brackets and italics belong to the verse but not to the appointed text. Each oration, and the Entrance Antiphon, is identified by the opening words of its Latin and described, and no English is supplied for them.

Entrance Antiphon

Salus populi ego sum, dicit Dominus. The Missal prints no scriptural reference.

The antiphon is an oracle in the first person. The Lord names himself the salvation of the people, promises to hear them from whatever tribulation they cry out of, and declares himself their Lord for ever. It is a composed liturgical text and not a verse of Scripture, so that no biblical English stands for it, and none is printed.

Collect

Deus, qui sacrae legis omnia constituta. Long conclusion.

The address says that God has made everything the sacred law lays down rest on the love of himself and of neighbour. The petition asks that those who keep his precepts may come to eternal life. No English is printed.

First Reading

Isaiah 55:6–9. Lectionary no. 133.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), ISA 55:6–9

⁶Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found: call upon him, while he is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God: for he is bountiful to forgive. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 145 (144):2–3, 8–9, 17–18; the response is taken from v. 18a. Lectionary no. 133.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), PS 144:18, FIRST HALF, AS THE RESPONSE

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him[: *to all that call upon him in truth*].

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), PS 144:2–3, 8–9, 17–18

²Every day will I bless thee: and I will praise thy name for ever; yea, for ever and ever. ³Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of his greatness there is no end.

⁸The Lord is gracious and merciful: patient and plenteous in mercy. ⁹The Lord is sweet to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

¹⁷The Lord is just in all his ways: and holy in all his works. ¹⁸The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth.

The psalm is sung in three strophes of two verses each. The verse numbers are the same in the Hebrew and the Vulgate numbering of this psalm.

Second Reading

Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a. Lectionary no. 133.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), PHIL 1:20–24, 27

²⁰[*According to my expectation and hope; that in nothing I shall be confounded: but with all confidence, as always, so now also,*] shall Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain. ²²And if to live in the flesh: this is to me the fruit of labour. And what I shall choose I know not. ²³But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. ²⁴But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you. ²⁷Only let your conversation be worthy of the gospel of Christ[: *that, whether I come and see you, or, being absent, may hear of you, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind labouring together for the faith of the gospel*].

The reading enters verse 20 at the clause in which Christ is magnified in Paul's body, passes over verses 25 and 26, and takes from verse 27 only its opening command. "Conversation" in the Douay–Rheims means manner of life.

Alleluia Verse

Aperi, Domine, cor nostrum; cf. Acts 16:14b. Lectionary no. 133.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), ACTS 16:14, THE VERSE ON WHICH THE ACCLAMATION IS FORMED

[*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, did hear:*] whose heart the Lord opened to attend to those things which were said by Paul.

The Lectionary's "cf." marks an adaptation. Luke's sentence is narrative in the third person: the Lord opened Lydia's heart to heed what Paul said. The verse sung before the Gospel turns it into a petition in the first person plural, asking the Lord to open our heart to heed the words of his Son. The words of Acts are printed as the basis of the verse and are not the verse itself, for which no English is printed.

Gospel

Matthew 20:1–16a. Lectionary no. 133. No shorter form is given.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), MT 20:1–16

¹The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. ²And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent

them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the marketplace idle. ⁴And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. ⁵And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. ⁶But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? ⁷They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go ye also into my vineyard.

⁸And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. ⁹When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. ¹⁰But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: And they also received every man a penny. ¹¹And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, ¹²Saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats.

¹³But he answering said to one of them: friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? ¹⁴Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. ¹⁵Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good? ¹⁶So shall the last be first and the first last. [*For many are called but few chosen.*]

The appointed Gospel ends with the first sentence of verse 16. The second sentence stands in the Clementine Vulgate, which the Douay–Rheims translates, and is not read at this Mass. In the *Ordo lectionum Missae* the passage opens with a liturgical incipit that addresses the parable to the disciples.

Prayer over the Offerings

Munera, quaesumus, Domine, tuae plebis. Short conclusion.

God is asked to accept his people's gifts with favour, so that what they profess by devout faith they may lay hold of through the heavenly sacraments. No English is printed.

Communion Antiphon, First Option

Tu mandasti mandata tua custodiri nimis. Psalm 119 (118):4–5; the Missal cites it in the Vulgate numbering, as Ps 118, 4–5.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), PS 118:4–5

⁴Thou hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently. ⁵O! that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications.

Communion Antiphon, Second Option

Ego sum pastor bonus, dicit Dominus. John 10:14. Printed in the Missal after *Vel*.

DOUAY–RHEIMS (CHALLONER), JN 10:14

I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me.

The Missal prints this antiphon without “cf.”, yet it is not the bare verse. It inserts *dicit Dominus* after the opening clause, as the Entrance Antiphon also does, and it supplies the noun *oves*, which the Clementine Vulgate leaves unexpressed at this verse. The two Communion antiphons are alternatives, and one of them is sung or said.

Prayer after Communion

Quos tuis, Domine, reficis sacramentis. Short conclusion.

Those whom God restores with his sacraments are commended to his continual help, so that they may possess the effect of redemption, *redemptionis effectum*, both in the mysteries and in their manner of life, *et mysteriis . . . et moribus*. No English is printed.

Each Element in Its Setting

The texts of this Mass come from two books with separate histories. The antiphons and orations belong to the Missal's Twenty-fifth Week in Ordinary Time and are prayed with the readings of all three years; the readings, psalm and acclamation belong to the Lectionary's Year A. Each element has its own literary setting, textual facts and first commentators.

The Lord's oracle at the entrance

The Entrance Antiphon, *Salus populi ego sum, dicit Dominus*, is spoken in God's own person. He names himself the salvation of the people; he promises to hear them from whatever tribulation they cry out of; he declares himself their Lord for ever. The Missal prints no scriptural reference beside it, in Latin or in English, and it is not a verse of Scripture. The official *Antiphonary* identifies Ps 37 (36):39–40 as the text's basis, but in the Clementine Vulgate that psalm shares with the antiphon only the words *salus* and *tribulationis*. Closer phrases stand elsewhere in the Psalter: *Salus tua ego sum* (Ps 35 (34):3), *clamaverunt . . . exaudivit . . . ex omnibus tribulationibus* (Ps 34 (33):18) and *clamabit ad me, et ego exaudiam eum . . . in tribulatione* (Ps 91 (90):15). None of them is quoted: the antiphon is a composed oracle, and the Antiphonary's relation is an identified basis rather than an adaptation. Ildefonso Schuster, who knew it as an Introit of the earlier Roman Missal sung at the two stational Masses in the basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian, thought that it “emanates perhaps from the Itala” (*The Sacramentary*, vol. 3, p. 171). The Mass therefore begins before anyone has asked for anything: God speaks first, and what he says is a promise to hear.

The Collect: the law and its two loves

The Collect, *Deus, qui sacrae legis omnia constituta*, closes the Introductory Rites after the Gloria. Its address says that God has made all that the sacred law lays down rest on the love of himself and of neighbour, which recalls the Lord's answer about the great commandment: “On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40). Its petition is that those who keep God's precepts may come to eternal life. The prayer thus holds together three things the Gospel of the day will also hold together: a law to be kept, a love that is the law's whole content, and a life that is the end of both.

Isaiah 55: the summons and its reason

The first reading stands in the chapter that opens with a free invitation, “come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price” (55:1), and promises “an everlasting covenant . . . the faithful mercies of David” (55:3). After the appointed verses the chapter compares God's word to the rain that “shall not return to me void” (55:10–11), and the next chapter admits the stranger and the eunuch to the house of prayer (56:3–8). Within that frame the four verses make one movement. Verses 6–7 summon: seek, call, forsake, return, “for he is bountiful to forgive”. Verses 8–9 give the reason, and the word “for” binds it to the promise of pardon: God forgives abundantly because his thoughts are not ours.

St Jerome and St Thomas Aquinas both read the contrast of thoughts in that way, as a statement about mercy and not about divine inscrutability in general. Jerome paraphrases the Lord: do not think what I promise difficult or incredible, *impium et iniquum posse salvari* (*In Isaiam* XV, PL 24, 554). He applies Romans 11:33 to God's thoughts, "How incomprehensible are his judgments", precisely as the counsel by which the impious are saved. Aquinas compresses the same reading into one line: *Vos ultionem cogitatis, ego misericordiam*, you think of requital, I of mercy (*Super Isaiam* c. 55). The three interpretations of the Mass differ over which half of the passage carries the weight: the reach of the pardon, the shortness of the time, or the mercy that is higher than requital.

Psalm 145 (144): the praise of a king

The psalm, headed in the Douay–Rheims "Praise, for David himself", is an alphabetical hymn addressed to "God my king". The Lectionary takes three pairs of verses from it: daily praise of a greatness that has no end (2–3), the formula of mercy (8–9), and the Lord just in all his ways and near to all who call (17–18). St Robert Bellarmine reads the whole psalm as the praise of a king's virtues and finds them in these very verses: greatness without end in every dimension, mercy made continuous by patience, justice that "renders to all what is due to them", and ease of access, for the Lord "comes nigh at once to all that call upon him, never refusing an audience to anyone" (*Commentary on the Psalms*, Ps 144).

The last words of the third strophe, "in truth", are glossed in three ways. For St Augustine those who call in truth are those who want God himself and not only his gifts (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144.22). For St Hilary of Poitiers God is near to all by nature, since "in him we live and move and are" (Acts 17:28), and to call in truth is to call *non ex otio . . . neque ex infidelis ambiguitatis incerto*, neither idly nor out of the uncertainty of a doubting faith (*Tractatus super Psalmos* 144.21). For Bellarmine the phrase gathers all the conditions of prayer: faith, hope, at least the beginning of charity, desire and attention. The appointed verses stop short of the psalm's next line, "he will hear their prayer, and save them" (v. 19), which says again what the Entrance Antiphon promised.

Philippians 1: a prisoner's choice

Paul writes in chains (Phil 1:7, 13) and does not know how his case will end. The reading enters at his confidence that Christ shall "be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death", follows his dilemma through verse 24, omits the two verses in which he resolves it ("I know that I shall abide and continue with you all", 1:25), and adds the opening command of the exhortation that runs to 2:4. It is the first of four Sundays given to this letter, and its place here belongs to that course.

St John Chrysostom explains the two ways of magnifying: by life, because Christ delivers Paul from danger; by death, because "even death itself could not persuade me to deny Him". "To me, to live is Christ" he reads through Galatians 2:20: "I live not, he says, the common life"; as long as Christ is with him, "even though death overtake me, still I live". Death is gain "because I shall more clearly be present with Him; so that my death is rather a coming to life" (*Homilies on Philippians* 3). Aquinas gives the same two ways, *In corpore nostro Christus dupliciter magnificatur*: by devoting the body to his service, which is by life, and by exposing it for him, which is by death. He then asks what it means to call anything one's life. A man's life is what moves him as his end, as hunters call the hunt their life and friends their friend; Christ is Paul's life *quia solus Christus movebat eum*, because Christ alone moved him. Death is gain because it perfects a life that here is imperfect. The dilemma has two movers, *In homine enim duplex est motus, naturae, sc. et gratiae*: nature shrinks from death, and grace, which is charity, draws in two directions, to be with Christ and *ad profectum proximi*, toward the neighbour's progress (*Super Philippenses* c. 1, lect. 3). On verse 27 Chrysostom presses the word "only": "this, and nought else, is the only thing we should seek" (*Homilies on Philippians* 4).

The Alleluia verse: Lydia's heart made a prayer

By the acclamation before the Gospel the assembly greets the Lord who is about to speak to it (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 62). This Sunday's verse is formed from Acts 16:14. At Philippi, on the sabbath, by the riverside where prayer was made, Paul spoke to the women gathered there, and of Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira who worshipped God, Luke says that the Lord opened her heart "to attend to those things which were said by Paul". She was baptized with her household, and her house became the meeting place of the brethren (Acts 16:15, 40). The liturgical verse changes Luke's grammar. What he narrates of one woman the assembly asks for itself, and the words to be heeded become those of the Son. Acts 16:14 belongs to Luke's account of the founding of the church to which the second reading is addressed, so that the verse's basis and the letter both concern Philippi.

Matthew 20: the parable and its frame

The parable is an answer. The rich young man has gone away sad; Peter has asked, "Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?" (19:27); the Lord has promised the twelve their thrones and everyone who has left anything "an hundredfold" and "life everlasting", and has added, "many that are first, shall be last: and the last shall be first" (19:30). The parable follows at once, and its last line returns to that saying. Immediately afterwards Jesus goes up to Jerusalem and foretells his Passion for the third time (20:17–19). The appointed text ends with the first sentence of verse 16. The Clementine Vulgate and the Douay–Rheims continue, "For many are called but few chosen"; the *Nova Vulgata* published by the Holy See prints the first sentence only. Chrysostom, Jerome, St Gregory the Great and Aquinas all had the longer verse before them. Chrysostom, Gregory and Aquinas expound its second sentence, which this Mass does not read; Jerome carries it in his lemma and repeats it as the parable's end, and gives it no comment of its own.

Three questions run through the commentaries. What is the day, with its five hours? Who are the last? And what does the householder's reply decide? The three interpretations of the Mass follow the answers. A fourth question cuts across them all: how the closing saying, "So shall the last be first and the first last", stands to the parable it closes. For St Augustine it states the parable's equality. First and last are made equal "by equality of treatment, not by inverting their order. For what is the meaning of, 'the last were first, and the first last'? That both the first and last received the same" (*Sermo* 87.4). Chrysostom denies that the saying is drawn from the parable at all. In the parable "the first did not become last, but all received the same contrary to hope and expectation"; the saying foretells something "more strange", that the last shall come before the first, "so that that is one thing, and this another". He takes it as a dark hint at the Jews and, among believers, at those who shone at first and fell back and those who have risen from vice (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.4). Jerome makes the saying the key. The parable *ex his quae praemissa sunt, intelligitur*, is understood from what stands before it, namely the same saying at 19:30; the Lord ranks *non tempori . . . sed fidei*, not by time but by faith; and *titulus parabola huius finisque consentiunt*, the heading of the parable and its end agree (*Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, 140, 142). Aquinas records both of the first two senses under Chrysostom's name: the last are made equal to the first, or the last come before them (*Super Matthaeum* c. 20, lect. 1). Gregory draws only a caution from it: no one should exalt himself for his work or for his length of service, since no one yet knows how finely the judge will weigh them, and it is greatly to be rejoiced at to be even the last in the kingdom of God (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 19.4).

The Prayer over the Offerings

After the gifts are prepared the priest prays *Munera, quaesumus, Domine, tuae plebis*. God is asked to accept his people's gifts with favour, and the purpose clause joins two verbs: what the people profess by devout faith they are to lay hold of through the heavenly sacraments. Faith professes and the sacrament gives possession.

The two Communion antiphons

The Missal gives every Sunday in Ordinary Time two Communion antiphons, the first from the Psalms and the second for the most part from the Gospel, and lets either be chosen, with a preference for one that agrees with the Gospel of the day (rubrics for Ordinary Time, no. 6).

The psalm verses open the long alphabetical psalm of the law. A command is acknowledged, “Thou hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently”, and at once there follows a wish and not a boast: “O! that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications.” Augustine asks who speaks and answers, every member of Christ, *vel potius universum corpus Christi*, or rather the whole body of Christ. He defends the adverb: the *nimis* of the Latin means *valde*, “greatly”, and is no excess (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 118, s. 4.1). Hilary hears in verse 4 a rule against slackness: *nihil igitur dissoluto animo, nihil incurioso agendum est*, nothing is to be done with a slack or careless mind (*Tractatus super Psalmos* 118, Aleph 11). Bellarmine argues from the lawgiver: God commands “not by way of advice, but by strict precept”. What the wish of verse 5 confesses belongs to the third interpretation.

John 10:14 is spoken to the Pharisees after the healing of the man born blind (9:39–10:21). The good shepherd, who “giveth his life for his sheep”, is set against the hireling, who works for pay and flees when the wolf comes (10:11–13). The appointed verse is the second “I am the good shepherd”, with the mutual knowledge of shepherd and sheep; the next verse grounds that knowledge in the Father’s knowledge of the Son, and verse 16 speaks of “other sheep . . . not of this fold”. Gregory glosses the verb: *cognosco oves meas, hoc est diligo*, I know my sheep, that is, I love them (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 14.3). Aquinas follows him: the knowledge is one *non solum simplici, sed etiam probationis, et dilectionis*, not of bare acquaintance but of approval and love (*Super Ioannem* c. 10, lect. 4). Augustine’s forty-seventh tractate is headed on John 10:14–21. Its first five sections, those checked, pass from the shepherd who gives his life (v. 11) to verses 15–16, and they give the appointed clause no separate comment.

The Prayer after Communion

The last prayer, *Quos tuis, Domine, reficis sacramentis*, commends those whom God restores with his sacraments to his continual help. Its purpose clause names what they are to possess, the effect of redemption, *redemptionis effectum*, and the two places where they are to possess it: *et mysteriis . . . et moribus*, in the mysteries and in conduct. The Mass that opened with God’s promise to hear ends by asking that what is received at the altar be found again in the way its communicants live.

One Wage across the Ages: The Day as the History of Salvation

Heard in its widest sense, the householder's day is the whole history of the world. God has been calling labourers into his vineyard since the first just man, Israel through the long day and the nations at its end, and at evening he gives them all the one reward, which is eternal life. The parable then declares that the late comers' equal share is God's faithfulness to his own purpose and no wrong done to those who came before.

Five hours, five ages

Gregory the Great preached on this Gospel to the people in the basilica of St Lawrence, and his opening move is to identify the vineyard. The householder is the Creator, and his vineyard is the universal Church, *ab Abel iusto usque ad ultimum electum*, from Abel the just to the last of the elect who will be born at the end of the world; every saint she has brought forth is a branch she has put out. The hours are then the ages in which God has never ceased to send workers to tend it: morning from Adam to Noah, the third hour from Noah to Abraham, the sixth from Abraham to Moses, the ninth from Moses to the coming of the Lord, and the eleventh *ab adventu Domini usque ad finem mundi*, from the Lord's coming to the end of the world, the hour in which the apostles were sent. God worked his vineyard first through the fathers, then through the teachers of the law and the prophets, and last through the apostles. The workers of the first four hours Gregory takes together as the ancient Hebrew people, who in their elect strove from the world's beginning to worship God with right faith. At the eleventh hour the Gentiles are called, and it is they who answer that no man has hired them: *Nullus quippe ad eos patriarcha, nullus propheta venerat*, for no patriarch and no prophet had come to them (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 19.1).

Augustine divides the day in nearly the same way and for the same purpose. "The first righteous men, as Abel, and Noe, called as it were at the first hour", then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the third, Moses and Aaron at the sixth, the holy prophets at the ninth, and "in the end of the world all Christians, called as it were at the eleventh hour". Of each group he repeats one refrain: they "will receive together with us the blessedness of the resurrection" (*Sermo* 87.5). Jerome knows the scheme as the exposition of others. *Sunt qui hanc parabolam aliter edisserant*, he writes, there are those who expound this parable differently, and he sets out their hours: Adam and the patriarchs to Noah, Noah to Abraham and the circumcision given him, Abraham to Moses and the giving of the Law, Moses himself and the prophets, and at the eleventh hour *apostolos et gentium populum, quibus omnes invident*, the apostles and the people of the nations, whom all the others envy. He adds that the evangelist John understood this when, near sunset, he wrote, "Little children, it is the last hour" (1 Jn 2:18; *Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, 141). Aquinas gives the ages of the world as one of two senses of the day, and at the householder's words "I will also give to this last" he glosses without hesitation: *huic novissimo, idest gentili*, to this last, that is, to the Gentile, citing St Paul: "What then? Do we excel them? No, not so" (Rom 3:9; *Super Matthaeum* c. 20, lect. 1).

They do not draw the lines in the same places. Gregory and the expositors Jerome reports begin with Adam; Augustine begins with Abel. Gregory runs the ninth hour to the coming of the Lord, Augustine gives it to the prophets, and Jerome's report gives it to Moses and the prophets together; Aquinas divides at David, giving the sixth hour to the time from Abraham to David and the ninth to the time from David to Christ. On the workers of the eleventh hour they differ in emphasis. For Gregory they are the Gentiles, to whom no prophet had come, and they are also everyone who has come into the world since the Mediator; for Augustine they are all Christians; for Jerome's report and for Aquinas they are the people of the nations. None of this touches what the four hold in common: the one householder has been at work through every age, and the whole company of the just receives one wage.

Why the last are paid first, and what the first complain of

If all the just rise together, how can the last be paid before the first? Augustine answers with a calculation. Whoever receives his wage after one hour has, in a sense, received before the man who waited twelve. The first righteous have waited through the ages for the resurrection, and Christians wait a short time; “though we all receive together, yet we seem to have received first, because our hire will not tarry long in coming” (87.5). The wage itself admits no more and less, for “that denarius is life eternal, and in the life eternal all will be equal”. The saints will differ in brightness, one shining with wedded chastity and another with virginity, one with the fruit of good works and another with the crown of martyrdom, but “in respect to the living for ever, this man will not live more than that, nor that than this” (87.6). Aquinas makes the same distinction. Beatitude is one in its object and unequal in the share each has of it, as many who go to one river carry away more or less according to the vessel each brings; the soul that charity has enlarged receives more.

The murmuring is harder, since no one who receives the kingdom can grumble at it. Gregory refers it to the long delay of the just who lived before Christ. However rightly they had lived, they were not brought to the kingdom until he came down who opened paradise to men by his death; their murmuring is that long wait, and they receive the denarius after it when they pass to the joys of the kingdom. Then he places himself and his hearers in the parable: *Nos autem qui ad undecimam venimus*, we who have come at the eleventh hour do not murmur after our labour, because, coming into this world *post Mediatoris adventum*, after the Mediator’s coming, we are led to the kingdom as soon as we leave the body (19.4). Jerome explains the grievance as envy, and he observes that the logic of the complaint convicts every hour in turn. If the householder is unjust, he is unjust not to one but to all, since the man of the third hour also worked less than the man of the first, and the man of the sixth less than he. *Omnis itaque retro vocatio gentibus invidet, et in Evangelii torquetur gratia*: every earlier calling envies the Gentiles and is tormented by the grace of the Gospel. The closing saying then means for him that the Jews are turned from head to tail and *nos de cauda*, we from the tail, to the head (PL 26, 141). Aquinas records both explanations, Gregory’s and the one he attributes to Hilary and Jerome, that the people of the Jews murmured because the Gentile was made their equal.

Gregory does not let the scheme flatter his congregation. The Gentiles could plead that no one had hired them. What, he asks, shall we say in our excuse, who came to the faith almost from our mother’s womb and heard the words of life from the cradle (19.1)? In the history of salvation his hearers belong to the last hour; in their own lives most of them were called at the first. At that point the parable passes to the second interpretation of the formulary.

The householder goes out

Augustine gives the parable’s verb a meaning that carries this interpretation beyond the Gospel. The householder “went out” to hire. One who is inside his house is hidden from those outside; when he goes out he is seen. “So Christ is in secret, as long as He is not known and acknowledged; but when He is acknowledged, He hath gone out to hire labourers.” On the cross he lay hid; after the resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, when the hundred and twenty “began to speak with the tongues of all nations”, then “was the calling manifest, now He went out to hire”. Now the Church herself speaks in the tongues of all nations: “what tongue has not the Christian religion reached?” (87.9). The eleventh hour, on this account, is the hour of the mission, and the call reaches the idle through the voices of those who are sent: “we are servants of his household, we are sent to hire labourers.”

A pardon wide enough for the nations

Jerome reads the first reading against the same horizon. The prophet, he says, is warning his own people after the *turba gentilium*, the crowd of the Gentiles, has taken up the mercies of David that they refused: *dum tempus est, agite poenitentiam*. When the Lord then says that his thoughts are not our thoughts, Jerome hears an answer to disbelief about the reach of pardon. Do not think it incredible, the Lord says, that the impious and the unjust can be saved, *vel populum Iudaeorum, vel omnes qui in gentibus nesciebant Deum*, whether the people of the Jews or all those among the nations who did not know God. And on the verses about the rain and the word that follow the reading he adds: *Non sit incredulus populus nationum*, let not the people of the nations disbelieve that after such crimes the impious is suddenly saved (*In Isaiam* XV, PL 24, 553–555). Jerome does not mention the parable. The Lectionary sets the two passages side by side, and what he says of the one is what Gregory and Augustine say of the other: God’s ways are above ours in extending his covenant to those who stood outside it. The chapter itself points the same way. The verse before the reading promises, “thou shalt call a nation, which thou knewest not: and the nations that knew not thee shall run to thee” (55:5), and the next chapter brings “the children of the stranger that adhere to the Lord” into a house that “shall be called the house of prayer, for all nations” (56:6–7).

The psalm gives this interpretation its word, and the word is “all”. “The Lord is sweet to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works”; he is “just in all his ways” and “nigh unto all them that call upon him”. Bellarmine insists that the first of these is meant without restriction: “The expression, ‘The Lord is sweet to all,’ is absolutely true, because God ‘maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad’”. The psalm’s own horizon is as long as the householder’s day. Between the first and second of the appointed strophes it sings, “Generation and generation shall praise thy works” (v. 4), and between the second and third, “Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages” (v. 13).

Philippi: a purple-seller and an apostle of the nations

Two texts of the Mass concern Philippi, the Alleluia verse, whose basis is set there, and the letter addressed to its church, and both belong to the eleventh hour as this interpretation understands it. The Alleluia verse is formed from the conversion of Lydia, a Gentile who worshipped God, in a Roman colony of Macedonia (Acts 16:12–14). St Bede sees in her more than one convert. *Significat namque Ecclesiam*, he writes, she signifies the Church: a seller of purple, because the Church gives her blood for Christ to buy eternal life, and one who constrained the apostle to stay, *quia repulsam a Iudaeis Evangelii praedicationem Ecclesia interna devotione cordis suscepit*, because the Church received with the inward devotion of the heart the preaching of the Gospel that the Jews had driven away (*Retractatio in Actus apostolorum* 16, PL 92, 1025). When the assembly asks that its own heart be opened, it takes the place of the woman in whom the Church of the nations first listened.

The second reading shows the labourer who was sent to that city. No Father read here connects Paul’s dilemma with the parable; the connection lies in the facts of the letter. Paul, whom Augustine calls “specially sent as an apostle to the Gentiles” (*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 47.5), writes to a church of the last hour, and the “fruit of labour” for which he consents to go on living is their progress. He has borne the burden of the day and the heats as few have, and he does not reckon his hours against anyone.

One people at the altar

In this interpretation the Missal’s own texts, prayed with the readings of all three years, serve this Gospel by what they already say. The Entrance Antiphon speaks of one people and of one Lord who is theirs for ever: *Salus populi ego sum*. The people whose salvation he is has no second rank. The Collect rests everything the sacred law laid down on the love of God and of neighbour. The law given to those who were hired first is thus not set aside when the wage is given to the last; it is gathered into its two loves, and those are asked of every labourer at every hour. The Prayer over the Offerings speaks of the gifts of God’s

people, *tuae plebis*, in the singular: one people brings them, and what that people professes in faith it is to grasp in the sacraments. The first Communion antiphon puts on the lips of the last-called the ancient word that the commandments are to be kept “most diligently”. The Prayer after Communion names what the labourers have in hand before the evening comes, the effect of redemption, the one wage already begun in mystery and in conduct.

The second Communion antiphon brings its own witnesses. The verse sung is John 10:14, and two verses later the shepherd says, “other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring . . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” Gregory hears his own history in that sentence: the Lord had in view *redemptionem nostram, qui ex gentili populo venimus*, the redemption of us who have come from the Gentile people, and he makes *ex duobus gregibus unum ovile*, one fold out of two flocks, joining the Jewish and the Gentile people in his faith, as Paul says, “he is our peace, who hath made both one” (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 14.4). Augustine notes that Christ came in person only to Israel and to the Gentiles “only sent”, and he will not let that be a lesser gift: “He Himself was in those whom He sent”, and “it is His voice that is heard in those whom He sends”. Of the two flocks, “as of two walls, is the corner-stone formed” (*Tractatus* 47.4–5). Both comments concern verse 16, which is the antiphon’s context and not the appointed verse: the sheep he knows are drawn from both peoples, and he feeds them at one table.

A parable’s details, and how far they may be pressed

Read so, the parable becomes an allegory of its own details, and the difficulties come from the witnesses themselves. Chrysostom lays down a rule of method: “The saying is a parable, wherefore neither is it right to inquire curiously into all things in parables word by word, but when we have learnt the object for which it was composed, to reap this, and not to busy one’s self about anything further” (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.3). He states the rule about the murmuring, and he invokes it a second time about the excuse of the last-hired: “And if they say, ‘No man hath hired us,’ in the first place as I said we must not be curious about all the points in the parables; but here neither is the good man of the house represented to say this, but they . . . For that He called all, as far as lay in Him, from the first even the parable shows” (64.3). He does not apply the rule to the hours, to which he gives a meaning of his own, the ages of a life, and he does not mention the reading of them as the ages of the world. His second application nevertheless meets this interpretation at a point on which it leans. Gregory takes that excuse as the Gentiles’ true plea, that no patriarch and no prophet had come to them, and Aquinas, where he reads the day as the age of the world, likewise refers the words to the Gentile people and holds them excused because they had not the prophets as the Jews had. For Chrysostom the words are the labourers’ own and not the householder’s, who leaves them unrefuted because he means to win the men over, and God called all, as far as lay in him, from the first. That is a real difference among the witnesses read, and it concerns one sentence of the parable.

Jerome reports the scheme as the view of others and prefers to read the hours as the ages of a life. The scheme’s own witnesses do not agree on its details. The ages of the world are therefore a received allegory of the parable and not its plain sense: the text names no Abel and no Gentile. What the allegory rests on is the parable’s frame, the saying about first and last, which Chrysostom too takes as “darkly hinting at the Jews”, and the larger fact the four expositors see in it, that the God who called Israel has called the nations to the same life. The Entrance Antiphon, the orations, the first Communion antiphon and the second reading take their places in this interpretation by their own wording; the placing is the editor’s, not a commentator’s.

The four senses of this interpretation

Literal.

A landowner hires workers at five hours of one day, pays the last as he agreed to pay the first, and defends his right to do so. Isaiah promises abundant pardon to the wicked who return, because God’s ways are not

ours. Paul, imprisoned and uncertain of his sentence, stays at his work for a young church. Luke records that the Lord opened the heart of a Gentile woman at Philippi.

Allegorical.

The day is the history of salvation and the vineyard is the Church from Abel to the last of the elect (Gregory). Christ is the householder who “went out” when he made himself known to the nations after Pentecost (Augustine). The one denarius is the life he opens to Israel and to the Gentiles together. Lydia signifies the Church, which took to heart the preaching the Jews had driven away (Bede), and the two flocks become one fold under one shepherd (Gregory; Augustine).

Moral.

Those who have long been in the Church do not resent those who arrive late, and do not count their years of service as a claim on God. Every earlier calling, Jerome says, envied the Gentiles the grace of the Gospel, and the same grievance can return in anyone who came before another. Those born into the faith have less excuse for idleness than those to whom no prophet came (Gregory). The labourer who has borne the day’s burden stays at his post for the sake of those called late, as Paul does.

Anagogical.

At the evening of the world all the just, from Abel onward, “will receive together . . . the blessedness of the resurrection” (Augustine). They will differ in brightness and be equal in life without end (Augustine), one beatitude shared according to the measure of each (Aquinas). The fathers who waited long have already passed, after their delay, to the joys of the kingdom, and those who come after the Mediator are led to it as soon as they leave the body (Gregory).

Seek the Lord While He May Be Found: The Day as a Human Life

The same day can be measured on a smaller clock. It is one human life, from the morning of childhood to the last hour of old age, and the householder goes out into every part of it. God calls at every age; the one who comes late is truly received; therefore no one may despair. And because no one knows how long his day will be, no one may wait for a later hour. Heard in this way the Mass is a summons to turn now, addressed equally to those who have served long and to those who have long stood idle. The prophet's "while he may be found" is its motto, and nearly every other text supplies either the promise that a late cry is heard or the warning that the time is short.

The hours of a life

Chrysostom states this sense as the plain meaning of the figures. "By a vineyard He meaneth the injunctions of God and His commandments: by the time of laboring, the present life: by laborers, them that in different ways are called to the fulfillment of the injunctions: by early in the morning, and about the third and ninth and eleventh hours, them who at different ages have drawn near to God, and approved themselves" (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.3). Jerome gives it as his own view, *Mihi videntur*, and fills the hours with names and ages. The labourers of the first hour are Samuel, Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who can say with the psalmist, "From my mother's womb thou art my God" (Ps 22 (21):11); those of the third began to serve God from puberty; those of the sixth took up Christ's yoke in mature age; those of the ninth when already declining toward old age; those of the eleventh in extreme old age, *et tamen omnes pariter accipiunt praemium, licet diversus labor sit*: and yet all alike receive the reward, though the labour differs (*Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, 141).

Augustine and Gregory, who also read the hours as the ages of the world, add this sense as a second one and say so. "Besides that solution of the parable," Augustine writes, "the parable may be seen to have an explanation in respect even of this present life": infants fresh from the womb are called at the first hour, boys at the third, young men at the sixth, those verging on old age at the ninth, the altogether decrepit at the eleventh, "yet all these are to receive the one and the same denarius of eternal life" (*Sermo* 87.7). Gregory follows the sun through the day. Childhood is the morning of our understanding; adolescence is the third hour, when the sun climbs and the heat of age grows; youth is the sixth, when the sun stands at the centre and strength is at the full; old age is the ninth, when the sun comes down from the height; and the eleventh is the age called decrepit (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 19.2). Aquinas sets the same sense beside the ages of the world: the life of a man is one day, childhood is its morning, and some are given no occasion of returning to God until old age (*Super Matthaeum* c. 20, lect. 1).

Gregory also says what it is to work in this vineyard. Those labour for the Lord who think *non sua, sed lucra dominica*, not of their own gains but of the Lord's, who serve with zeal of charity, watch to win souls and hasten to bring others with them to life. *Nam qui sibi vivit*, for he who lives for himself and feeds on the pleasures of his flesh is rightly rebuked as idle, because he pursues no fruit of God's work (19.2). Idleness in the market-place is thus no absence of activity. It is a life whose activity has no reference to God.

What the parable is for

Chrysostom asks why the Lord told the parable when he did. He had just spoken to the rich young man and to Peter about the casting away of riches, which "needed much vigor of mind and youthful ardor"; so, "in order to kindle in them a fire of love, and to give vigor to their will, He shows that it is possible even for men coming later to receive the hire of the whole day". The parable has two audiences and one lesson for each: it is spoken "to the former, that they may not be proud, neither reproach those called at the eleventh hour; to the latter, that they may learn that it is possible even in a short time to recover all" (64.4). Its

object is “to render more earnest them that are converted and become better men in extreme old age, and not to allow them to suppose they have a less portion” (64.3).

On this interpretation the murmuring cannot be a fact about the saved, and Chrysostom says so with force: “There is no one who is thus justifying himself, or blaming others in the kingdom of Heaven; away with the thought! for that place is pure from envy and jealousy.” The complaint is a device of the story. The Lord brings in others displeased at the late comers’ blessings “to teach us that these have enjoyed such honor, as could even have begotten envy in others”, as a man might say, “Such a one blamed me, because I counted thee worthy of much honor”, when no one had blamed him at all. Why, then, were not all hired at dawn? “As far as concerned Him, He did hire all; but if all did not hearken at once, the difference was made by the disposition of them that were called.” God called Paul when Paul was ready to obey, and so too the thief, “although He was able to have called him even before, but he would not have obeyed” (64.3). That sentence returns in the third interpretation.

Gregory finds the same thief in the parable. He came at the eleventh hour, and *etsi non habuit per aetatem, habuit tamen sero per poenam*: his lateness was not of age but of punishment. He confessed God on the cross and breathed out the spirit of life almost with the words. And the householder began to pay from the last, because he brought the thief to the rest of paradise before he brought Peter (19.3).

Certain of the reward, uncertain of the day

If the last hour earns the whole wage, why not wait for it? Augustine raises the objection himself: “lest any put off to come into the vineyard, because he is sure, that, come when he will, he shall receive this denarius.” His first answer comes from the story. None of the labourers bargained for a later start. Those found at the third hour did not say, “Wait, we are not going thither till the sixth hour”, for what the householder would give “was in the secret of His own counsel: do thou come when thou art called”. His second answer comes from life. To the man in his vigour who proposes to come at the eleventh hour he says: “The Householder hath it is true promised thee a denarius, if thou come at the eleventh hour, but whether thou shalt live even to the seventh, no one hath promised thee ... Why then dost thou put off him that calleth thee, certain as thou art of the reward, but uncertain of the day? Take heed then lest peradventure what he is to give thee by promise, thou take from thyself by delay” (87.8).

He then names the two opposite ways of missing the call, for “these two things are the death of souls, despair, and perverse hope”. Some reckon their sins too great to be forgiven and give themselves up to them; to these the householder goes out through Ezekiel, “In whatsoever day a man shall turn from his most wicked way, I will forget all his iniquities.” Others reason from that very promise, “why should I turn to-day and not to-morrow?”, and to these he goes out again by another book: “Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day.” God has promised forgiveness to the one who turns, “but no one has promised thee to-morrow” (87.10–11). Gregory presses the same point on the old: *saltem in ultima aetate resipiscite*, at least in your last age come to your senses, and come late to the ways of life now that you have little labour left to give (19.3). From the verse’s closing sentence on the many called and the few chosen, which this Mass does not read, he draws two further cautions: no one should presume on himself, and no one should despair of a neighbour sunk in vice, *quia divinae misericordiae divitias ignorat*, because he does not know the riches of the divine mercy (19.6).

While he may be found

The first reading says in the prophet’s words what Augustine says in the preacher’s. Jerome’s comment on “Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found” marks the limit of the time: seek him *dum estis in corpore, dum datur locus poenitentiae*, while you are in the body, while room is given for repentance; and seek him *non loco, sed fide*, not by place but by faith. Seeking is not enough, he continues, unless the impious leaves his former ways; but to the one who does return God is not slow. He draws near to those who draw near

to him, *et filio longo post tempore revertenti, laetus occurrit*: he runs gladly to meet the son who comes back after a long time (*In Isaiam* XV, PL 24, 553). Aquinas divides the passage into four steps, and they are the steps of a conversion: the fit time, *antequam adversitas vel mors veniat*, before adversity or death comes; the manner, in which the *impius* turns from sin against God and the *iniquus* from sin against his neighbour; the fruit, which is manifold mercy; and the removal of mercy's obstacle, since God's thoughts are of mercy where ours are of requital (*Super Isaiam* c. 55). His two directions of sin answer to the two loves on which the Collect rests the law. To forsake one's way is to come back to both.

The psalm, in Augustine's hands, turns into the same sermon. At "patient and plenteous in mercy" he asks how many sinners God puts up with, *non damnans, sed exspectans*, not condemning but waiting, and then he turns on his hearer: *vocat te nunc, exhortatur te nunc; exspectat donec resipiscas, et tu tardas!* He calls you now, he exhorts you now; he waits until you come to your senses, and you delay! It is part of God's great mercy, he adds, that he has made the day of our death uncertain, so that, expecting daily to depart, we may at some time be converted (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144.11, PL 37, 1876). The argument is the one he makes from the parable in *Sermo* 87, here drawn from the psalm's own verse. Bellarmine glosses the same word: God is patient, "which means that his mercy is continuous; for no matter how often we may provoke him, he will not turn to anger at once, but rather waits to see would we do penance". The strophes on either side supply the two halves of this interpretation. "Every day will I bless thee" is the voice of the labourer who does not wait for a better day, and "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him" is the promise made to the one who calls at the eleventh hour.

A life that bears fruit

Paul, in the second reading, is a labourer near the evening of his day, and he does not count his hours. Chrysostom notices how exactly he weighs the present life. By saying "to die is gain" he casts out the desire of it; by saying that to live in the flesh is "the fruit of my work" he shows "that the present life also is needful, if we use it as need is, if we bear fruit; since if it be unfruitful, it is no longer life. For we despise those trees which bear no fruit". And he adds the sentence that joins the letter to the parable's market-place: "God hath made thee live, that thou mayest live to Him" (*Homilies on Philippians* 3). Paul is like the wrestler who might be crowned and chooses to go on contending, and his reason is the vineyard's: "that I may make the plot which I have planted bear much fruit" (*Homilies on Philippians* 4). Aquinas reads verse 22 in the same sense: if life brings the fruit that Christ is magnified, then life in the flesh *est bona, et fructuosa*, is good and fruitful (*Super Philippenses* c. 1, lect. 3). Gregory's definition of the labourer, one who seeks the Lord's gains and not his own, is a description of the Paul of this passage. The comparison between Paul and the labourers is the editor's and none of these authors', but each of them measures a life by its fruit for God.

The second reading's last line, "Only let your conversation be worthy of the gospel of Christ", is the point at which Chrysostom's two homilies meet. His sermon on the parable ends by demanding "a life suitable to our faith", since all the Lord's parables "demand virtue in our works" (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.4); his sermon on the letter hears in Paul's "only" that this and nothing else is to be sought. The late comer is received for nothing, and what is then asked of him is a whole life.

From the opened heart to the altar

Conversion begins in hearing, and the Alleluia verse asks for the hearing. In the opening lines of his sermon on this parable Augustine describes how God cultivates us as a husbandman his field: he does not cease "to open our heart, as it were, by the plough of His Word, to plant the seed of His precepts, to wait for the fruit of piety" (87.1). Lydia is the figure of that cultivation. Her heart is opened, she attends to what is said, she is baptized with her household, and at once she opens her house (Acts 16:14–15). The assembly that asks for her grace before the Gospel asks to be made able to answer the householder when he comes out.

The Missal's texts give the turning its beginning and its end. At the entrance the Lord promises to hear the people from whatever tribulation they cry out of, and that promise is the ground on which a late cry, even the thief's, is not refused. The Collect asks that those who keep God's precepts may come to eternal life; since Chrysostom's vineyard is "the injunctions of God and His commandments", the prayer asks in plain words for what the parable pictures, labour in the vineyard and the denarius at evening. The Prayer over the Offerings asks that what is professed by faith be laid hold of in the sacraments, and the turning that began in hearing is completed at the altar. The first Communion antiphon is the convert's own wish, "O! that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications", with Hilary's warning against doing anything *dissoluto animo*, with a slack mind. The second is Gregory's examination of conscience. Hearing "I know mine, and mine know me", he tells his people, *Videte si oves eius estis*: see whether you are his sheep, see whether you know him, and know him *non per fidem, sed per amorem . . . non ex credulitate, sed ex operatione*, not by faith but by love, not by belief but by deed; for "He who saith that he knoweth him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar" (1 Jn 2:4; *Homiliae in Evangelia* 14.4). The Prayer after Communion asks for that same proof, that the effect of redemption be possessed *et moribus*, in conduct as well as in the mysteries.

The reward of delay, and the silence about the murmurers

Augustine names the chief difficulty himself: the parable, taken alone, seems to reward delay. His answer, that the wage is certain and the day is not, is true and comes from outside the story, since within it every labourer lives until evening. The second difficulty is one of proportion. The murmuring and the householder's reply occupy a third of the parable, and on this interpretation they have little to do; Chrysostom says outright that they are not to be pressed. An account of the parable that leaves its ending idle invites another that begins there. The Entrance Antiphon, the Collect, the Prayer over the Offerings and the Prayer after Communion take their places here by their own wording; the placing is the editor's, not a commentator's.

The four senses of this interpretation

Literal.

Men are hired at five hours of one working day and all are paid the day's wage. A prophet calls his people to seek the Lord and return to him while there is time, promising pardon. An apostle who longs to be with Christ judges that his remaining alive is needful for others, and asks of them only a life worthy of the Gospel.

Allegorical.

The hours of the day are the ages of a life, from the child called from the womb to the old man at the edge of night (Jerome; Augustine; Gregory). The householder who goes out is Christ making himself known (Augustine alone, *Sermo* 87.9). The thief who confessed God on the cross is the labourer of the eleventh hour, paid before the first (Gregory). The God of the first reading is the father who runs gladly to meet the son returning after a long time (Jerome).

Moral.

Turn today. Do not despair over a wasted past, for all is forgiven the one who turns; do not presume on a future no one has promised (Augustine). Work for the Lord's gains and not your own (Gregory), let life bear fruit (Chrysostom; Aquinas), prove by deeds that you know the shepherd (Gregory), and despair of no one else.

Anagogical.

The evening is each person's death, whose day God has mercifully hidden (Augustine), and beyond it the common reckoning when the steward calls the labourers. What was sought in time is then possessed: to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which Paul calls "by far the better", and the one denarius of eternal life.

Because I Am Good: The Wage as Gift and the Giver as Reward

The first two interpretations read the parable from its hours. The third reads it from its evening. The parable turns on the householder's answer to the complaint, and the answer says three things: the first are wronged in nothing; what the last receive is no payment but a gift; and the giver's reason is his own goodness. Four expositors of the Gospel state this of the same verses, and the rest of the Mass presses the point further, until the wage itself turns out to be the giver. The *Ordo lectionum Missae* marks the same place in the two readings it correlates. The title it sets over the Gospel is the householder's question, "Is thy eye evil, because I am good?", and the title it sets over the first reading is the sentence that explains such goodness, "my thoughts are not your thoughts". The second reading has a title of its own, from its own course.

Payment to one, gift to another

Augustine paraphrases the householder's defence at length, and he supplies the words that the parable leaves unspoken. "Friend, I do thee no wrong" means: "I have paid thee what I agreed for. To this other it is my will not to render a payment, but to bestow a gift." Blame would be just in either of two cases, if he had taken what was not his or if he had withheld what was owed; "but when I pay what is due, and give besides to whom I will, neither can he to whom I owed find fault, and he to whom I gave ought to rejoice the more" (*Sermo* 87.4). His conclusion keeps both halves: "To the first, it is a payment; to the other, a free gift; yet the same thing is given alike to both" (87.6).

Gregory comes to the same verses by another road and says the same thing in a sentence. The householder adds, "is it not lawful for me to do what I will?", *quia ipsa regni perceptio eius est bonitas voluntatis*, because the very receiving of the kingdom is the goodness of his will. *Stulta enim quaestio est hominis contra benignitatem Dei*: it is a foolish complaint that a man brings against the kindness of God. No one would have cause to complain if God does not give what he does not owe, but only if he failed to give what he owed (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 19.4).

Aquinas sets out the logic. In his reply the householder shows *iustitiam, et suam misericordiam*, his justice and his mercy. There is no injury, *quia quod meum est, do isti, non quod tuum est*: what I give this man is mine, not yours. If he owed the money to another, or held it under another, he could not dispose of it; but he is lord. *Balivus enim non potest dare aliquid nisi secundum merita; Rex autem potest sine meritis: sic Deus, qui est omnium dominus, potest*. A bailiff can give only according to deserts, a king can give without them, and so can God, who is lord of all. Nor is the gift favouritism, for *in eo quod ex misericordia datur, non est acceptio personarum*: where a thing is given out of mercy there is no respect of persons, since what is purely mine I may give to whom I will. The murmuring, then, had no cause in any defect of the master; its only cause was mercy shown to someone else. Hence the name the householder gives it: *nequam est proprie qui de bonitate dolet*, he is properly called evil who grieves at goodness; "Is thy eye evil" *eo quod circa te iustitiam ostendi, circa alterum misericordiam*, because I have shown justice to you and mercy to another? (*Super Matthaicum* c. 20, lect. 1). Chrysostom, whose own account of the parable belongs to the second interpretation, agrees so far: the Lord frames the story so as to show "that the whole is of His love to man" (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.4).

The evil eye

Jerome describes the grievance with precision. The first-hired accuse the householder, *non quod minus acceperint quam fuerat constitutum*, not because they received less than was agreed, but because they wanted to receive more than those on whom *clementia conductoris*, the mercy of the one who hired them, had been poured out. The penny answers them by what it is. *Denarius figuram regis habet*: the denarius bears the figure of the king. *Recepisti ergo mercedem quam tibi promiseram, hoc est, imaginem et similitudinem*

meam: quid quaeris amplius? You have received the wage I promised you, that is, my image and likeness; what more do you seek? And he diagnoses the wish behind the complaint: *non tam ipse plus accipere, quam alium nihil accipere desideras*, you desire not so much to receive more yourself as that another should receive nothing, as though the worth of the reward were lessened by another's sharing it. At the householder's "Take what is thine, and go thy way" he names the terms on which the first-hired are paid: *Iudaeus in Lege non gratia, sed opere salvatur. Qui enim fecerit eam, vivet in ea*, under the Law the Jew is saved not by grace but by work, for the one who does it shall live in it. The second sentence is the Law's own promise to those who keep it (Lev 18:5, in the form St Paul cites at Rom 10:5), and Jerome gives it as the ground of the first. Placed where it is, the remark describes the contract on which the first-hired are paid. He hears the murmurers' voice again in Luke's parable, where the elder son envies the younger, will not have the penitent received, and accuses his father of injustice (*Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, 141–142). Chrysostom makes the same comparison with the elder son, although he will not allow that such a feeling survives in the kingdom (64.3).

Augustine hears a sentence very like the murmurers' from those who love God for his gifts and not for himself. When the gifts go elsewhere they ask, *Quare mihi abstulisti, et illis dedisti?*, why have you taken from me and given to them?, and in asking it they accuse God of injustice (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144.22). The evil eye is therefore a way of looking at God as much as at one's neighbour. It measures him as a paymaster, and by that measure his generosity to another is a loss to oneself.

The wage is the giver

What then is the denarius, if it cannot be made less by being shared? All the interpretations take it as eternal life. This one asks what that life consists in. Of the denarius itself Jerome says that the coin is the king's own image and likeness, and that likeness is the promised wage; Aquinas repeats that the denarius bears the king's likeness. Two other witnesses say what the last reward is, each of his own text and neither of the parable. Augustine, at the psalm's promise that the Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth, says that to call in truth is to want the giver more than his gifts: *quanto beatior eris, cum seipsum tibi dederit?*, how much more blessed will you be when he gives you himself? (144.22). Gregory, preaching on the Good Shepherd, names the pasture that the sheep find at last: *Pascua namque electorum sunt vultus praesens Dei*, the pasture of the elect is the present face of God, and the mind that beholds it without failing is fed without end on the food of life (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 14.5). A reward of that kind cannot be divided into a larger and a smaller sum. It can only be received, by each according to his capacity, and it is the same for the one who bore the heat of the day and for the one who came at dusk.

A justice that wills mercy

The first reading gives the reason for the householder's conduct before the Gospel narrates it. "Let the wicked forsake his way . . . for he is bountiful to forgive. For my thoughts are not your thoughts." Aquinas opens the contrast in a single antithesis, *Vos impii, ego pius; vos ultionem cogitatis, ego misericordiam*: you are impious, I am kind; you think of requital, I of mercy (*Super Isaiam* c. 55). Jerome lets the Lord speak in the first person: *Ego enim clementissimus sum, et multus ad ignoscendum*, for I am most merciful, and great in forgiving (PL 24, 555). The labourers who expected more had reasoned correctly by the thoughts of men: more hours, more pay. The householder's reckoning is as far above theirs as the heavens above the earth. The chapter has already said what kind of commerce this is: "come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price" (55:1).

The psalm then holds together the two words the murmurers thought incompatible. It sings that the Lord is "gracious and merciful" and also that he is "just in all his ways". Hilary explains how both can be said: *habet dei iustitia miserandi voluntatem; neque tamen per miserandi voluntatem ita a se erit demutata, ne iustitia sit. humana autem iustitia solet in id devenire, ne misericors sit*. God's justice has the will to show

mercy, and yet by that will it is not so changed from itself as to cease to be justice; human justice, on the other hand, commonly arrives at being unmerciful (*Tractatus super Psalmos* 144.14). Hilary is speaking of the psalm and says nothing of the parable, but his sentence describes the householder's two dealings exactly. With the first he keeps his contract to the penny, which is justice, as Bellarmine glosses the psalm's seventeenth verse: "he renders to all what is due to them". With the last he is generous, and his generosity takes nothing from his justice. The murmurers speak for the human justice that has no room for mercy. Augustine draws from the same verse the posture that befits the hearer: praise his justice, and accuse your own injustice (144.21). And at the psalm's formula of mercy he carries the principle of gift as far as it will go: consider *quid dederit qui gratis dedit*, what he has given who gave freely, pardon, the spirit of justification, charity, and beyond these eternal life and the company of the angels, *totum de misericordia*, all of it from mercy. *Merita tua nusquam iactes, quia et ipsa tua merita illius dona sunt*: nowhere boast of your merits, because your merits themselves are his gifts (144.11, PL 37, 1876).

To live is Christ

The second reading shows a labourer for whom the wage is a person. "To me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain." Paul already possesses what he desires and desires what he already possesses, and his only hesitation is between having Christ more fully and serving him longer. Aquinas raises the obvious objection: the desire to be with Christ springs from the love of God, the desire to remain from the love of neighbour, and the first is the greater; why then does Paul incline to the second? He answers by distinguishing two loves of God. *Duplex est dilectio Dei*. By one a man wants to enjoy God and delight in him, *et hoc est bonum hominis*, and this is the man's own good. By the other, the love of friendship, a man *praeponit honorem Dei, etiam huic delectationi, qua fruitur Deo, et haec est perfecta charitas*: he puts God's honour before even the delight of enjoying God, and this is perfect charity. Paul chose the more perfect, as when he wished to be "anathema from Christ, for my brethren" (Rom 9:3; *Super Philippenses* c. 1, lect. 3). Chrysostom gives the same account: Paul remains "for Christ's sake, that I may render more loving unto Him those whom I have made his servants"; he sought, as he says elsewhere, not "that which profited myself" but his neighbour (*Homilies on Philippians* 4).

Neither author mentions the parable, and Paul's place in it is the editor's. No hour is given him: he is a labourer who has borne the burden of the day and who, offered his wage, asks for a longer day so that others may come to the same pay. The murmurers reckon their hours against the late comers; Paul adds hours for their sake. He can do so because for him the wage was never a sum. A man who works for Christ's honour loses nothing when Christ is generous to someone else.

Asking for what is commanded

If the wage is a gift, what of the work? Augustine carries the interpretation a step further, and the first Communion antiphon is his text. The psalmist has just said that God commanded his commandments to be kept most diligently, and he does not go on to say that he has kept them. He says *Utinam*, "O! that". Augustine comments: when you hear *Utinam*, recognise the voice of one who wishes, and lay down the pride of one who presumes; for who wishes for what he has in his own power? *Ergo si optat homo quod praecipit Deus; ut det ipse quod praecipit, rogandus est Deus*: if a man wishes for what God commands, then God must be asked to give what he commands. He aims the remark at those who hold that God helps us to justice only by making his precepts known, leaving us to fulfil them by our own strength (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 118, s. 4.2, PL 37, 1510). Hilary says the same of the same verse: *nisi a deo dirigamur, infirmes per naturam nostram erimus. adiuvandi igitur per gratiam eius dirigendique sumus*, unless we are directed by God we shall be weak by our nature; we need therefore to be helped and directed by his grace (*Tractatus super Psalmos* 118, Aleph 12). Bellarmine takes the wish first as the king's example of obedience and brings grace in afterwards: the law makes the just more just, but the first justification "cannot be ascribed to the law, but to grace", and the psalmist's next prayer is "withhold not your grace and your assistance,

without which I can do nothing". The difference is one of emphasis. The Collect prays in the same manner. Its petition is that those who keep God's precepts may come to eternal life, so that the keeping and the arriving both stand inside a prayer.

The Alleluia verse takes the second step, which among the authors read only Augustine states. Writing on the predestination of the saints, he argues from St Paul's request that God "may open unto us a door of speech" (Col 4:3) that "even the very beginning of faith is the gift of God. For it would not be sought for from Him in prayer, unless it were believed to be given by Him." Lydia is his example: "This gift of heavenly grace had descended to that seller of purple . . . for she was so called that she might believe" (*De praedestinatione sanctorum* 20.41). The liturgical verse is a prayer of exactly that kind. Luke narrates that the Lord opened one woman's heart; the Lectionary has the whole assembly ask him to open theirs; and by Augustine's argument a Church that asks for the opening believes that the opening is given. The petition is the Lectionary's adaptation and not Luke's wording, and Augustine's argument is made from Colossians, with the verse of Acts as its instance.

Chrysostom comes to the verse as a preacher going through Luke's narrative, and he reads it differently. At "Whose heart the Lord opened" he says: "Therefore we need God, to open the heart: but God opens the hearts that are willing: for there are hardened hearts to be seen." At "she attended" he divides the sentence: "The opening, then, was God's work, the attending was hers: so that it was both God's doing and man's" (*Homilies on Acts* 35). He does not say where the willingness comes from, and he argues there against no one; his concern is what the verse gives to God and what it gives to Lydia. On the parable he speaks in the same way: God called all from the first, and "the difference was made by the disposition of them that were called". Augustine's sermon on the parable does not take up the question why some come late; its nearest word is that the householder's "going out" is Christ's making himself known. The two therefore meet only at Acts 16:14, and the difference between their readings of it is real. Chrysostom speaks of hearts that are willing and assigns the opening to God and the attending to Lydia. Augustine counts the very beginning of faith a gift and says that Lydia was called so that she might believe. Bede, the one later author read on the verse, passes over the clause in silence. The second step therefore rests on Augustine's argument, with Chrysostom's different reading of the verse beside it. It does not reach the first step or the claim with which this interpretation began, which Chrysostom states for himself: the parable shows "that the whole is of His love to man".

The shepherd who feeds with himself

The second Communion antiphon sets the Gospel's householder beside another figure who does not calculate. "I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me." Gregory begins from the shepherd's goodness, which is not an added gift but his essence, and from its proof: he laid down his life for his sheep *ut in sacramento nostro corpus suum et sanguinem verteret, et oves quas redemerat, carnis suae alimento satiaret*, that he might turn his body and blood into our sacrament and satisfy with the food of his own flesh the sheep he had redeemed (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 14.1). Against him stands the hireling, who feeds the Lord's sheep *non pro amore intimo . . . sed ad temporales mercedes*, not out of inward love but for temporal wages (14.2). The contrast is the parable's own. The labourer who counts his hours against his neighbour's has taken the hireling's view of the vineyard, and the shepherd gives what no contract could oblige, himself. Augustine tells his people why they listen to Christ in their preacher: "Because you are the sheep of Christ, purchased with the blood of Christ. You acknowledge your own price." The "ruler's table" of which Scripture speaks, he says, is the altar: "you there find the body and blood of Christ; let him who comes to such a table be ready with similar provision" (*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 47.2). Aquinas explains the possessive in "mine": *meae, inquam, praedestinatione, vocatione, et gratia*, mine, I say, by predestination, calling and grace, as if to say that they follow him because they love him (*Super Iohannem* c. 10, lect. 4). The sheep do not make themselves his; his knowing, which is his loving, comes first.

The Missal's remaining texts speak in the same order. At the entrance God names himself his people's salvation before anything is asked of them. The Prayer over the Offerings asks him to accept their gifts with favour and then reverses the direction of giving: what they profess by faith they are to receive through the sacraments. The Prayer after Communion asks that those whom he has restored may go on being helped; his aid is continual, not a wage paid once and done with, and the effect of redemption is something held from him in mystery and in conduct alike. Those who come to Communion at this Mass have been hired at many different hours, and all are given the same food.

The contract that remains

The parable's own terms give the strongest difficulty. The first-hired have a contract and are paid on it, so the parable does not say that no one earns anything. Augustine keeps this, "to the first, it is a payment"; Aquinas keeps it, justice to the one and mercy to the other; and Jerome keeps it when he sets beside "Take what is thine" the Law's own promise that the one who does it shall live in it. Augustine resolves the tension only in his comment on the psalm, by calling merits themselves God's gifts, and that goes beyond what the parable states. The second difficulty is one of evidence, and it concerns the furthest step alone. That the first opening of the heart is God's gift is Augustine's statement, and his argument is made from Colossians with Lydia as its instance. Chrysostom, the other ancient author read on Acts 16:14, speaks of hearts that are willing and gives the opening to God and the attending to Lydia, and he says nothing of where the willingness comes from. The step rests on Augustine's argument and on no agreement between the two. On the claim with which the interpretation began they do agree, for Chrysostom too finds in the parable that the whole is of God's love to man. The Entrance Antiphon, the Collect, the Prayer over the Offerings and the Prayer after Communion take their places in this interpretation by their own wording; the placing is the editor's, not a commentator's.

The four senses of this interpretation

Literal.

A householder keeps his contract with the first, chooses to be generous to the last, and asks whether an eye is evil because he is good. The prophet grounds God's abundant pardon in thoughts that are not ours. The psalm calls the same Lord merciful and just. An apostle for whom to live is Christ consents to live longer for his people's sake.

Allegorical.

The householder's goodness is the goodness of Christ, the good shepherd. Of the shepherd of John 10 and his sheep, and not of the parable, Gregory says that he knows his own by loving them and feeds those he has redeemed with his own body and blood; Aquinas, that the sheep are his by predestination, calling and grace; and Augustine, that they acknowledge in his blood their own price and find his body and blood on the altar. Of the parable's coin Jerome says that it bears the king's figure and that the wage promised is the king's own image and likeness, and he does not name Christ there. The likeness given to each labourer alike is Christ.

Moral.

Work without reckoning, as Paul does; ask for what is commanded (Augustine; Hilary); boast of no merit, since merits are gifts (Augustine); rejoice at another's undeserved good. To grieve at goodness is the evil eye (Aquinas), and the wish that another receive nothing is its mark (Jerome).

Anagogical.

The one denarius is God giving himself. Of the coin itself Jerome says that the wage promised is the king's own image and likeness. Augustine and Gregory speak each of his own text and neither of the parable: of the psalm's promise to those who call in truth Augustine asks, "how much more blessed will you be when

he gives you himself?”, and of the pasture that the shepherd’s sheep find Gregory says that it is the present face of God. A reward of that kind cannot in itself be more to one and less to another, though each receives it according to the measure of his charity.

The Three Interpretations Compared

All three interpretations take the householder as God, the denarius as eternal life, and the first reading’s contrast of thoughts as a statement about mercy. All three find the same Christ in the parable: the one who went out to the nations, the one who calls each person at every age, and the one whose goodness is the reason for the wage. They differ in the question they put to the parable, and therefore in the verses on which they rest and in what they ask of the other texts.

Question	One wage across the ages	The day as a human life	Because I am good
What is the day?	The history of the world, from the first just man to the end.	One human life, from childhood to extreme old age.	Not decisive; the evening’s answer is.
Who are the last?	The Gentiles, and with them all who come after Christ (Gregory); all Christians (Augustine); the people of the nations (Jerome’s report; Aquinas).	Those who turn to God late in life, and the thief on the cross.	Anyone, as one who receives what is not owed.
Where does the weight fall?	On the hiring through the day, vv. 1–7.	On the question at the eleventh hour, “Why stand you here all the day idle?”, v. 6.	On the householder’s reply, vv. 13–15, from which the <i>Ordo</i> takes its title.
What is the murmuring?	The long wait of the just before Christ (Gregory); every earlier calling’s envy of the Gentiles (Jerome).	A device of the story, not to be pressed (Chrysostom).	The evil eye: grief at goodness (Aquinas); the wish that another receive nothing (Jerome).
How is Isaiah 55 heard?	God’s pardon reaches the nations that did not know him (Jerome).	The time is short: while in the body (Jerome), before adversity or death (Aquinas).	Mercy against requital (Aquinas); the Lord most merciful and great in forgiving (Jerome).
What does Paul show?	The apostle of the nations at work for a church of the last hour.	A life measured by its fruit (Chrysostom; Aquinas).	“To live is Christ”: he stays for Christ’s honour and his people’s progress (Aquinas; Chrysostom).
What is asked at the Alleluia?	A place with Lydia, who signifies the Church that received the preaching (Bede).	The hearing in which conversion begins.	The opening Augustine counts God’s gift; for Chrysostom God opens and Lydia attends.
Principal witnesses	Gregory, Augustine, Aquinas; Jerome as reporter.	Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Aquinas.	Augustine, Gregory, Jerome, Aquinas, Hilary.

The first two interpretations are complementary. Augustine, Gregory and Aquinas hold both and say so, and Jerome sets them side by side, preferring the second. They answer different questions, how wide God’s call has been and how urgent it is for me, and neither excludes the other; Gregory passes from one to the other in a single breath when he reminds his hearers that they, who stand at the world’s eleventh hour, were called at the first hour of their own lives. Chrysostom stands apart. He holds the second interpretation alone and gives the hours no reference to the ages of the world. Where Gregory and Aquinas take the excuse “No man hath hired us” as the Gentiles’ true plea, he holds that God called all from the first. Yet he too hears in the saying about first and last a dark hint at the Jews.

The third interpretation differs from the other two in kind. They read the parable from its hours and it reads from the ending, and it is the only one of the three for which the murmuring is the point and not a problem. Its furthest step, that the first opening of the heart is God's gift, rests on Augustine's argument. He and Chrysostom both speak of Acts 16:14 and read it differently. Chrysostom says that God opens the hearts that are willing and gives the opening to God and the attending to Lydia, without saying where the willingness comes from; Augustine counts the very beginning of faith a gift and says that Lydia was called so that she might believe. The difference touches that step and does not reach the interpretation's centre, since Chrysostom himself holds that in the parable "the whole is of His love to man".

A second difference of exegesis crosses all three, and it concerns the parable's last line. For Augustine "the last shall be first" states the parable's equality; for Chrysostom it is a separate prophecy of reversal; for Jerome it is the key by which the whole parable is read; Aquinas records the first two. The Lectionary ends the Gospel on that line and leaves it open.

The Missal's prayers are patient of all three hearings because they say something prior to each. The Lord is his people's salvation and hears them whenever they cry; the law is love of God and neighbour, and its keeping ends in life; what faith professes the sacrament gives; and redemption is to be possessed at the altar and in conduct. A congregation that has been in the vineyard since morning, a penitent who has come at the last hour, and a labourer who has begun to count what he is owed all hear the same prayers and receive the same Communion, the pledge of the one wage placed already in every hand.

Scriptural Date and Location

Each passage the Mass reads or sings from Scripture, and each biblical basis an official liturgical source identifies, once, in canonical order; beneath each, its attribution, its setting and the critical horizon. The Entrance Antiphon is composed, but the official Antiphonary identifies a psalm basis; the three orations carry no biblical date.

Textual unit	Citation	Location	Date
Entrance Antiphon, identified basis	Ps 37 (36):39–40	No place named in the verses	Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
The official ICEL Antiphonary identifies these verses as the basis of the composed antiphon; the Missal itself prints no locator. The relation is identified basis, not adaptation. The date is the Psalter's common critical composition bound, not a date for this psalm or for the antiphon.			
Communion Antiphon, first option	Ps 119 (118):4–5	No place named in the verses	Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
The opening strophe of the alphabetical psalm of the law; the verses name no author and no place, and no traditional date is held for them. The date is the common critical composition bound in the NABRE Psalms introduction, not a precise date for this psalm or for the Psalter's assembly.			
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 145 (144):2–3, 8–9, 17–18; response v. 18a	No place named	Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Headed in the Douay–Rheims "Praise, for David himself" (v. 1): an attribution by title, with no traditional date attached. An alphabetical hymn to "God my king". The date is the Psalter's critical boundary only.			
First Reading	Isa 55:6–9	Traditional ministry: Juda and Jerusalem (1:1); critical horizon: Babylonian exile; writing site unestablished	Traditional attribution: Isaias (ministry in Souvay's traditional account), B.C. 740–701. Prophecy given: Toward the end of the Babylonian exile.

Textual unit	Citation	Location	Date
Traditional attribution: the prophet Isaias; the range shown is the era the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> (1910) gives his ministry, from the closing year of Ozias to the apparent date of his latest prophecies. The article's tentative collection hypothesis concerns chapters 1–35, not this chapter or the whole book. It treats chapters 54–55 under the heading “Second Isaias” and reports the contention of most modern non-Catholic scholars that those chapters come from an author “living towards the close of the Babylonian Captivity”, against which it sets the Pontifical Biblical Commission's decision of 28 June 1908. The separate critical horizon comes from the introduction to Isaiah in the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE), which generally attributes chapters 40–55 to an anonymous poet prophesying toward the end of the Babylonian exile. That is a horizon for the prophecy, not a date for the writing or final assembly of the book. The exile is the prophetic horizon, not proof of an exact place of writing.			
Gospel	Mt 20:1–16a	Spoken to the disciples on the way to Jerusalem, after Peter's question (19:27) and before the third prediction of the Passion (20:17–19)	Event – Narrated event date unresolved. Composition – disputed: c. A.D. 38–45; c. A.D. 40–42; A.D. 40–45; c. A.D. 60–68; c. A.D. 64–67; c. A.D. 50. Composition (Catholic critical chronology, for comparison) : The Greek Gospel of Matthew in the NABRE introduction, post-A.D. 70 date.
<i>Narrated event: a parable of Jesus, told within the journey that ends at Jerusalem (20:17–18).</i>			
Traditional attribution: St Matthew the Apostle. The Date column keeps as disputed alternatives the figures the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> reports (1911, 1912): its article on the Gospel opens its discussion of the date with the words “Ancient ecclesiastical writers are at variance” and says that in its own day “opinion is rather divided”. The alternatives are not of equal standing in their own sources: about A.D. 38–45 reckons from the Ascension; about A.D. 40–42 rests on a tradition of the apostles' dispersal that the article itself calls “admittedly not too reliable”; A.D. 40–45 is the article's report of Catholic opinion in its own day; about A.D. 60–68 is conditional on a later definitive departure of the apostles; about A.D. 64–67 rests on a text of Irenaeus whose difficulties of interpretation, the article says, prevent any positive conclusion; and the sixth traditional figure is said in the article on the New Testament of the original text of Matthew, which its author holds to have been Aramaic, the Greek rendering being left undated. The principal modern critical account in the NABRE introduction gives a “post-A.D. 70 date”, “probably at least a decade later”, without an upper bound. Its account is probabilistic. Jacquier's “Destination of the Gospel” reports publication in Judea for converted Jews; NABRE describes an unknown author and proposes Antioch in Syria as a plausible location for Jewish and Gentile Christians. The writing place is distinct from the parable's scene.			
Communion Antiphon, second option	Jn 10:14	Spoken to the Pharisees after the healing of the man born blind (9:40–10:6)	Composition – disputed: c. A.D. 90–100; A.D. 96–100.
<i>Narrated event: the discourse of the good shepherd.</i>			
Traditional attribution: St John the Apostle. The <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> gives the first range shown for “the Johannine writings” (1912) and the second as “the general opinion” for the Gospel, after conceding that “we possess no certain historical information” (1910). In “Circumstances of the composition”, Fonck reports Ephesus as the writing place and Christians of Asia Minor as the first readers, not as the discourse's setting. The Missal adapts the verse by adding <i>dicat Dominus</i> and the noun <i>oves</i>.			
Alleluia verse (its basis)	cf. Acts 16:14b, an adaptation	Event: Philippi, “the chief city of part of Macedonia, a colony” (16:12), by the riverside on the sabbath (16:13)	Event – disputed: A.D. 50–53; A.D. 51–54. Composition : c. A.D. 64.
<i>Narrated event: the conversion of Lydia during St Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22).</i>			
Traditional attribution: St Luke. The two event ranges are those the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> gives for the second journey in its articles on St Paul (1911) and on biblical chronology (1908); the former places Philippi in that journey without naming Lydia. The composition date is the one its article on Acts (1907) calls most probable for the completion of the book during Paul's Roman captivity, a different setting from Philippi. Acts addresses Theophilus (1:1) without locating him. The liturgical verse is a petition formed on Luke's narrative sentence and is not itself a verse of Scripture.			
Second Reading	Phil 1:20c–24, 27a	Paul in bonds (1:7, 13), at Rome in the received account; to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi” (1:1)	Composition – disputed: A.D. 61; A.D. 62–64.

Textual unit	Citation	Location	Date
Traditional attribution: St Paul, writing from captivity. The first figure is the year the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> 's chronology of St Paul gives the captivity letters, within the Roman captivity (1911); the second is the range its article on the letter gives for Paul "at Rome" (1911), where it adds that critics disagree whether the letter falls early or late in the Roman sojourn and that its author holds for late.			

Appendix: Liturgical Resolution

Celebration. The Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, a Sunday in Ordinary Time at place 6 of the table of liturgical days; green; Gloria and Creed. The formula is PC-S51-A, the Year A target of the parent PC-S51; it has the single Sunday form. A Mass anticipated on Saturday evening uses the same formulary, and there is no Vigil form.

Books, calendar and territory. The *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, for use in the dioceses of the United States of America (2011), whose Latin base is the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (2002), as reprinted with emendations in 2008; the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, second typical edition, volume I, no. 133, which follows the *Ordo lectionum Missae*, editio typica altera (1981); the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in the United States edition of 2011 with the emendations of 2021; the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*; and the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* for 2026. Only the national calendar is applied. No diocesan, religious, parish, titular, dedication or patronal calendar was supplied, and none is assumed.

Cycle and occurrence. Year A of the Sunday cycle runs from 30 November 2025 to 22 November 2026, and the national calendar enters 20 September 2026 as the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time with the readings of Lectionary no. 133. The weekday cycle governs no Sunday. The obligatory memorial of Saints Andrew Kim Tae-gon, Paul Chong Ha-sang and Companions, inscribed in the General Calendar on 20 September at place 10 of the table, is omitted this year under no. 60 of the *Universal Norms*; it is not transferred or commemorated and supplies no text to this Mass.

The Missal formulary and the three cycles. The antiphons and orations belong to the Twenty-fifth Week in Ordinary Time and are common to Years A, B and C; their text is recorded once, in the collection's record for that week. The readings, psalm and Alleluia verse are those of Year A alone.

Branches. No selection among the following was supplied, and none is inferred. Both Communion antiphons are studied in full.

Branch ID	Authority and trigger	Status	Units affected	Resolution
communion-antiphon-psalm	The Missal prints Ps 119 (118):4–5 first	appointed alternative	Communion Antiphon	Unselected; studied in full.
communion-antiphon-good-shepherd	The Missal prints Jn 10:14 second, under <i>Vel</i>	appointed alternative	Communion Antiphon	Unselected; studied in full. Rubric 6 for Ordinary Time prefers an antiphon that agrees with the Gospel of the day; the books do not say whether either does.
entrance-or-communion-chant-substitution	<i>General Instruction</i> 48 and 87: the Missal antiphon, a chant of the <i>Graduale Romanum</i> or <i>Graduale Simplex</i> , or another approved chant	permitted	Entrance; Communion	Unselected; the Missal antiphons are the texts studied.
psalm-or-acclamation-chant-substitution	<i>General Instruction</i> 61 and 62: a sung psalm or verse from the <i>Graduale</i> or another approved collection	permitted	Responsorial Psalm; Alleluia verse	Unselected; the Lectionary's psalm and verse are the texts studied.
offertory-chant	<i>General Instruction</i> 74	permitted	Preparation of the gifts	Unselected; the Missal prints no Offertory antiphon.

Branch ID	Authority and trigger	Status	Units affected	Resolution
sprinkling-rite	<i>General Instruction</i> 51 and the Order of Mass: on Sundays the blessing and sprinkling of water may replace the Penitential Act	ritual substitution	Introductory Rites	Unselected; it brings its own texts.
compatible-preface-and-eucharistic-prayer	Rubric 5 for Ordinary Time; <i>General Instruction</i> 364–365	permitted	Eucharistic Prayer	Unselected; one of the eight Prefaces of the Sundays in Ordinary Time with a compatible Eucharistic Prayer, as one coupled choice.
eucharistic-prayer-iv-with-preface	<i>General Instruction</i> 365 d	conditional	Eucharistic Prayer	Unselected; Eucharistic Prayer IV keeps its own invariable Preface.
concluding-blessing-form	The Missal’s solemn blessings and prayers over the people, at the priest’s discretion	permitted	Concluding Rites	Unselected; none is appointed to this Sunday.
local-proper-calendar	<i>Universal Norms</i> 59–60 with a particular calendar	conditional	Whole Mass	Not supplied; a local celebration would need its own resolution.

Appendix: Scope and Qualifications

Edition and formulary. The study treats the Mass of the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, as the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, and the *Lectionary for Mass* give it for the dioceses of the United States, in the national calendar alone, for the occurrence of 20 September 2026. Identity, occurrence and branches are set out in the preceding appendix and recorded in `instance/manifest.md` and `research/context.md`.

Text control. The Missal formulary was read in the Latin of the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (2002), in a digitally typeset reproduction, and compared with the list of changes for the 2008 reprint published in *Notitiae* 44 (2008), *Variationes et additiones*, which lists none for this Sunday, and with the *Antiphonary* excerpted from the English Missal (2010). No page of the 2008 reprint and no United States altar book was inspected, so the approved English orations were not read in any witness, and no chant book was collated. The Lectionary’s boundaries rest on three witnesses that agree in every figure: the national calendar for 2026, the bishops’ conference’s dated page of readings, and no. 133 of the Latin *Ordo lectionum Missae* (1981); the printed United States Lectionary was not inspected. Two questions about the text remain open. No critical apparatus of the Greek New Testament was opened, and nothing is said here about which manuscripts carry the second sentence of Matthew 20:16 or why the appointment is lettered 16a. Whether the United States Lectionary admits another Alleluia verse from a common set was not determined.

English. All Scripture is printed in the Douay–Rheims version as revised by Bishop Challoner, a public-domain study translation of the Clementine Vulgate. It is not the text proclaimed in the celebration; the controlling English is that of the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, and for the antiphons and orations that of the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition, neither of which is reproduced. The orations and the Entrance Antiphon are identified by Latin incipit and described, and the descriptions are not translations and may not be quoted as the prayers’ words. Where the Lectionary appoints part of a verse, the rest is printed in brackets as context. English glosses of patristic Latin that are not drawn from a named translation render the Latin printed beside them.

Reception. Each appointed Scripture passage has at least one ancient and one medieval or later witness read at an exact locus; the witnesses are those named in the References, and the search behind them is bounded and recorded in `research/scope.md`. The Greek Fathers were read in the English of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, as were Augustine’s *Sermo* 87, his tractate on John and his work on the predestination of the saints. Gregory was read in an electronic Latin text. Jerome on Matthew and on Isaiah, Bede, Hilary and Aquinas were read on page images of the printings named, with these limits: of Aquinas on Matthew only p. 262 and two sentences of pp. 258–261 were read on the page, the rest in a text layer, and what is reported from those four pages is paraphrased. Of Augustine’s *Enarrationes* the sentences quoted from 118, s. 4.1–2 and from 144.10–11 were read on the columns of Migne; what is reported from 144.21 and 22 rests on the electronic text of *augustinus.it* alone. Bellarmine was read in O’Sullivan’s abridged English of 1866, in a transcription, and the Latin was not compared. Schuster was read in a text layer of the 1927 English. No witness was collated with a modern critical edition. Not opened: Origen and Hilary on Matthew;

Eusebius, Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret on Isaiah; Chrysostom, Theodoret, Cassiodorus and Ambrose on the Psalms; Chrysostom and Cyril on John; and the medieval and later commentators. An editor's note in Migne names Origen as the source of the exposition Jerome reports; neither Origen nor Hilary on Matthew was read, and nothing is said here about who first proposed either reading of the hours or about the order in time or the mutual dependence of the witnesses. Chrysostom, Gregory and Aquinas expound the second sentence of Matthew 20:16, which this Mass does not appoint, and Jerome carries it without comment; their comments on it are used only where the text says so. Gregory preached his nineteenth homily on this Gospel at another point of the year, and nothing of that day is used. No commentary on the orations or on the Entrance Antiphon was sought, and a search of the texts held for earlier occurrences of the Collect and the Prayer over the Offerings found none, which does not show that they have no antecedents.

Relations among the elements. Three relations are stated by the liturgical books: the first reading is chosen in relation to the Gospel (*Praenotanda* 106), the psalm responds to the first reading (*General Instruction* 61), and the acclamation greets the Gospel (*General Instruction* 62). The second reading and the Gospel each belong to a semi-continuous course, and the Missal's antiphons and orations serve all three years. That the Alleluia verse's basis and the second reading both concern Philippi is an observation about the texts. Every other connection drawn between one element and another is this study's synthesis: grounded in a witness's statement about his own passage where one is cited, and otherwise an editorial proposal resting on the wording of the texts. No witness cited comments on this Mass.

Chronology. The Date cells retain the shared chronology corpus's relations and alternatives. Its Isaiah ministry era is traditional attribution, beside the separate critical late-exilic prophecy horizon; neither dates composition. The Psalter has a common composition bound, not a final-assembly date. Matthew's NABRE boundary is separately attributed critical evidence, not part of the default traditional alternatives. No date is held for the Gospel's narrated event. Writing sites, first readers and narrative settings are distinguished; the source checks and their limits are recorded in `research/scope.md`.

Rights. The Douay–Rheims, the Clementine Vulgate, the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, O'Sullivan's Bellarmine, the volumes of Migne, the Vienna Hilary, the Venice, Liège and Parma printings of Aquinas and the *Catholic Encyclopedia* are in the public domain. Gregory's Latin is quoted in short phrases from a licensed electronic edition. The Latin and English of the Missal, the *Ordo lectionum Missae*, the Lectionary, the *General Instruction*, the national calendar, the *Nova Vulgata* and the New American Bible introduction are protected; they are cited, and of the Latin books only incipits, the three titles of the *Ordo* and a few words needed by the argument are quoted.

Records. The composition of the target is audited in `propers/verified.md`; the reception search, loci, disagreements and negative results in `research/scope.md`; and the reasoning behind the three interpretations, with the class of every cross-element link, in `research/interpretations.md`. Earlier research received independent review; that review does not cover the revised historical dossier.

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