

The Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Roman Missal, Third Edition · Lectionary for Mass, no. 133

three interpretations of the proper, compared

Element	Text and reference	What it says
Entrance Antiphon	<i>Salus populi ego sum</i> , a composed text; identified basis Ps 37 (36):39–40	The Lord is his people’s salvation, will hear them in any tribulation, and is their Lord for ever.
Collect	<i>Deus, qui sacrae legis omnia constituta</i>	The whole law rests on love of God and neighbour; may those who keep it reach eternal life.
First Reading	Isa 55:6–9	Seek the Lord while he may be found; he is bountiful to forgive; his thoughts are not ours.
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 145 (144):2–3, 8–9, 17–18; response from v. 18a	The Lord gracious, merciful and patient, just in all his ways, near to all who call on him in truth.
Second Reading	Phil 1:20c–24, 27a	To live is Christ, to die is gain; Paul stays for his people’s sake.
Alleluia verse	<i>Aperi, Domine, cor nostrum</i> ; cf. Acts 16:14b	An adaptation: that the Lord open our heart to heed his Son’s words, as he opened Lydia’s.
Gospel	Mt 20:1–16a	Labourers hired at five hours and paid alike; the murmur; the householder’s reply; the last first.
Prayer over the Offerings	<i>Munera, quaesumus, Domine, tuae plebis</i>	May what the people profess in faith be laid hold of through the sacraments.
Communion Antiphon	First option: <i>Tu mandasti mandata tua custodiri nimis</i> ; Ps 119 (118):4–5	God commands that his commandments be kept most diligently; a wish that one’s 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>	May those restored by the sacraments possess the effect of redemption in the mysteries and in conduct.

The Communion antiphons are alternatives (the second stands under *Vel*); every other element is required. Scripture is quoted in the Douay–Rheims (Challoner), a public-domain study translation, not the Lectionary’s approved English proclaimed at Mass; psalm numbers are the Lectionary’s, with the Vulgate’s in parentheses.

Sense	Synthesis
Literal	A householder hires labourers at five hours of one day, pays the last the denarius he agreed with the first, and asks the murmurer, “Is thy eye evil, because I am good?” Isaiah calls the wicked back to a God “bountiful to forgive”, merciful and just in the psalm; Paul, in chains, stays at his work for the Philippians.
Allegorical	The vineyard is the Church from Abel to the last of the elect (Gregory); its hours are the ages of the world (Gregory; Augustine) or of one life (Chrysostom; Jerome). The householder who “went out” is Christ made known to the nations (Augustine). The wage is the king’s image and likeness (Jerome).
Moral	Come when called, for the reward is certain and the day is not (Augustine). Know the shepherd by deed and not by belief alone (Gregory). To grieve at goodness is the evil eye (Aquinas). Boast of no merit, and ask of God what he commands (Augustine).
Anagogical	The denarius is eternal life: all the just receive the resurrection together, alike in living for ever and unlike in brightness (Augustine). God will give himself to those who call on him in truth (Augustine, of the psalm); the pasture of the elect is his present face (Gregory, of the shepherd’s sheep).

Scriptural Date and Location

Textual unit	Citation	Location	Date
Entrance basis	Ps 37 (36):39–40	Identified, not adapted; no place; the date is the Psalter's bound, not the antiphon's	Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Communion, 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; no author is named and no traditional date is held. The date is the modern composition bound from 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	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. The response is taken from v. 18a. 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.
Traditional author: Isaias. Souvay dates his ministry through the apparent latest prophecy, not his death. His tentative collection hypothesis concerns 1–35, not this chapter. NABRE generally attributes chapters 40–55 to an anonymous poet prophesying toward the exile's end: prophetic activity, not composition or final assembly. Souvay reports the exilic contention but upholds the Biblical Commission's whole-book attribution (28 June 1908).			
Gospel	Mt 20:1–16a	Spoken to the disciples after Peter's question (19:27)	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, before the third prediction of the Passion (20:17–19).</i>			
Traditional author: Matthew the Apostle. Jacquier's disputed figures: about A.D. 38–45 reckons from the Ascension; about A.D. 40–42 rests on a dispersal tradition Jacquier calls “admittedly not too reliable”; A.D. 40–45 reports Catholic opinion in 1911; about A.D. 60–68 is a conditional reckoning; about A.D. 64–67 rests on inconclusive Irenaeus testimony; the sixth traditional figure is Durand's Aramaic original, Greek rendering undated. NABRE's probabilistic account gives a “post-A.D. 70 date”, “probably at least a decade later”, not a closed interval. Jacquier reports publication in Judea for converted Jews; NABRE proposes an unknown author and a plausible Antiochene setting for Jewish and Gentile Christians.			
Communion, second option	Jn 10:14	To the Pharisees, after the man born blind is healed (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). Fonck reports writing at Ephesus for Christians of Asia Minor. 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 in Macedonia, by the riverside on the sabbath (16:12–13)	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 author: Luke. Prat (“St Paul”), who does not name Lydia, and Howlett (“Biblical Chronology”) give the second-journey ranges. Breen (“Acts”) offers probable completion during Paul's Roman captivity. Theophilus is the addressee (Acts 1:1), with no location given. The liturgical verse is an adapted petition.			
Second Reading (Paul)	Phil 1:20c–24, 27a	Paul in bonds (1:7, 13), at Rome in the received account; to the saints at Philippi (1:1)	Composition – disputed: A.D. 61; A.D. 62–64.

The Propers: Themes and Movement

This Mass sets a complaint about fairness inside a promise of mercy. At its centre a householder pays the labourers of one hour the denarius he agreed with those of twelve, and he answers their murmur with a question: “Is thy eye evil, because I am good?” Before that Gospel is read a prophet has already given the reason, “my thoughts are not your thoughts”, and a psalm has called the same Lord “gracious and merciful” and “just in all his ways”. Before either, at the entrance, God has spoken first and promised to hear. The Mass moves from that promise, through the summons and the parable, to an altar where those hired at every hour are given the same food, and it ends by asking that what is received be found again in conduct.

Two books and three stated relations

The texts come from two books. 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. The liturgical books state three relations among them: the first reading is chosen in relation to the Gospel, the psalm responds to the first reading, and the acclamation greets the Gospel. The Apostle and the Gospel are each read in a semi-continuous course of their own, and Philippians begins on this Sunday a course of four Sundays. The *Ordo lectionum Missae* marks what it singles out in each reading by the title it sets over it: over the first reading, *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, from its own course, *Mihi vivere Christus est* (Phil 1:21).

God speaks first, and a prophet gives the reason

The Entrance Antiphon, *Salus populi ego sum, dicit Dominus*, is spoken in God’s own person: he 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 oracle, and the Missal prints no scriptural reference beside it; the official Antiphonary nevertheless identifies Ps 37 (36):39–40 as its basis, without making the antiphon an adaptation of those verses. The Mass therefore begins before anyone has asked for anything. The Collect, *Deus, qui sacrae legis omnia constituta*, rests all that the sacred law lays down on the love of God and of neighbour, recalling the Lord’s word that on these two commandments “dependeth the whole law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40), and asks that those who keep God’s precepts may come to eternal life.

In the first reading 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 as a statement about mercy and not about divine inscrutability in general. Jerome has the Lord say, do not think it incredible *impium et iniquum posse salvari*, that the impious and the unjust can be saved (*In Isaiam* XV, PL 24, 554); Aquinas puts it in one line, *Vos ultionem cogitatis, ego misericordiam*, you think of requital, I of mercy (*Super Isaiam* c. 55). The psalm answers in three pairs of verses: daily praise of a greatness without end, the formula of mercy, and the Lord just in all his ways and near to all who call. 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.

Philippi, the parable and the altar

Two texts of the Mass concern Philippi. Paul writes in chains (Phil 1:7, 13); the reading follows his dilemma between death and life, omits the verses in which he resolves it (1:25), and adds the opening command of the exhortation that follows, “Only let your conversation be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” The Alleluia verse is formed from Acts 16:14, where the Lord opens the heart of Lydia “to attend to those things which were said by Paul”. 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.

The parable is an answer. Peter has asked, “what therefore shall we have?” (19:27); the Lord has promised the 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. 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* prints the first sentence only, and this Mass does not read the second.

After the Gospel the Missal’s texts speak of receiving. The Prayer over the Offerings joins two verbs: what the people profess by devout faith they are to lay hold of through the heavenly sacraments. At Communion the Missal gives two antiphons and lets either be chosen. The psalm verses acknowledge a command and at once add a wish and not a boast, “O! that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications”; the verse of John is the second “I am the good shepherd”, set against the hireling who works for pay (Jn 10:11–13). The Prayer after Communion names what communicants are to possess, *redemptionis effectum*, the effect of redemption, and the two places where they are to possess it, *et mysteriis . . . et moribus*, in the mysteries and in conduct.

Three interpretations of one evening

Three questions run through the commentaries on the parable: what the day is, who the last are, and what the householder’s reply decides. The Fathers and Doctors answer along three lines, and each line, carried through every text of the Mass, yields an interpretation of the whole. The first takes the 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 one 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: what the last receive is a gift, the first are wronged in nothing, and the wage is finally the giver himself. The first two are complementary, and St Augustine, St Gregory the Great and Aquinas hold both and say so. The third differs in kind, since it reads the parable from its ending and is the only one for which the murmuring is the point and not a problem. None of these witnesses expounds this Mass as a whole; each speaks of his own passage.

The Propers: Detailed Commentary

The five hours: the ages of the world, or the ages of a life

Gregory the Great begins his homily on this Gospel by identifying 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. The hours are the ages in which God has never ceased to send workers, from the morning that runs from Adam to Noah to the eleventh hour that runs from the Lord's coming to the end of the world. The workers of the first four hours are the ancient Hebrew people, and at the eleventh the Gentiles are called (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 19.1). Augustine divides the day in nearly the same way, from Abel and Noah to "all Christians, called as it were at the eleventh hour", and of each group he repeats one refrain: they "will receive together with us the blessedness of the resurrection" (*Sermo* 87.5). Aquinas glosses "this last" *idest gentili*, that is, the Gentile (*Super Matthaeum* c. 20, lect. 1). They draw the lines in different places, Gregory beginning with Adam and Augustine with Abel, and hold in common that the one householder has been at work through every age and that all the just receive one wage.

Jerome knows that scheme as the exposition of others and gives as his own view, *Mihi videntur*, that the hours are the ages of a life, from those called from the womb to those who come in extreme old age; and yet all alike receive the reward, though the labour differs (*Commentarii in Matthaeum* III, PL 26, 141). St John Chrysostom states this sense as the plain meaning of the figures, the hours being "them who at different ages have drawn near to God" (*Homilies on Matthew* 64.3), and he gives them no reference to the ages of the world. Augustine and Gregory add it as a second sense and say so: "Besides that solution of the parable," Augustine writes, it "may be seen to have an explanation in respect even of this present life" (87.7). Aquinas sets the two senses side by side. 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. 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 (19.1)? In the history of salvation his hearers belong to the last hour; in their own lives most were called at the first.

One sentence of the parable does divide the witnesses. Gregory takes "No man hath hired us" as the Gentiles' true plea, for no patriarch and no prophet had come to them, and Aquinas likewise holds them excused because they had not the prophets. For Chrysostom the words are the labourers' own and not the householder's, a point of the parable not to be pressed: "For that He called all, as far as lay in Him, from the first even the parable shows" (64.3). The ages of the world are a received allegory of the parable and not its plain sense, for the text names no Abel and no Gentile. For the third interpretation the day is not decisive; the evening's answer is.

How far the pardon reaches, and how long it waits

Both measures are taken to the first reading, and by the same author. For Jerome the prophet warns his own people after the crowd of the Gentiles has taken up the mercies they refused, and the pardon that is not to be thought incredible reaches both the people of the Jews and all those among the nations who did not know God (*In Isaiam* XV, PL 24, 553–555). On the summons itself he marks the limit of the time. Seek *dum estis in corpore, dum datur locus poenitentiae*, while you are in the body, while room is given for repentance (col. 553). Aquinas names the fit time, *antequam adversitas vel mors veniat*, before adversity or death comes (*Super Isaiam* c. 55).

The psalm gives the first interpretation its word, and the word is "all": "The Lord is sweet to all", "just in all his ways", "nigh unto all them that call upon him". To the second interpretation the psalm gives the word "patient". Augustine asks how many sinners God puts up with, not condemning but waiting, and then turns on his hearer: *vocat te nunc, exhortatur te nunc; expectat 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 (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144.11, PL 37, 1876).

The second interpretation needs that argument, because the parable, taken alone, seems to reward delay. 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." To the man who proposes to come at the eleventh hour he says, "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?" (87.8). Despair and perverse hope, he says, are the death of souls (87.10–11). The answer is true and comes from outside the story, since within it every labourer lives until evening. Gregory finds the thief in the parable, late by punishment and not by age (19.3). Chrysostom gives the parable one lesson for each of two audiences: it is spoken "to the former, that they may not be proud . . . to the latter, that they may learn that it is possible even in a short time to recover all" (64.4).

The murmur, and what the householder's reply decides

No one who receives the kingdom can grumble at it, and the interpretations part most plainly over what the murmuring is. Gregory refers it to the long delay of the just who lived before Christ, who were not brought to the kingdom until he came who opened paradise by his death (19.4). Jerome explains the grievance as envy and observes that it convicts every hour in turn, since the man of the third hour also worked less than the man of the first: *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 (PL 26, 141). Chrysostom describes no grievance among the saved: "There is no one who is thus justifying himself, or blaming others in the kingdom of Heaven; away with the thought!" The complaint shows how great an honour the latecomers receive (64.3). In the second interpretation, governed by the urgency of conversion, the murmuring and reply have little to do; the third begins with that ending.

Four expositors state of these same verses what the reply decides. Augustine supplies the words the parable leaves unspoken: "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" (87.4). For Gregory the very receiving of the kingdom is the goodness of the householder's will (19.4). Aquinas sets out the logic. *Balivus enim non potest dare aliquid nisi secundum merita; Rex autem potest sine meritis*: a bailiff can give only according to deserts, a king can give without them, and so can God, who is lord of all. Hence the name of the grievance, *nequam est proprie qui de bonitate dolet*: he is properly called evil who grieves at goodness. Jerome names the wish behind the complaint: you desire not so much to receive more yourself as that another should receive nothing (PL 26, 141–142). Chrysostom agrees so far with the third interpretation's centre: the Lord frames the story to show "that the whole is of His love to man" (64.4).

The psalm holds together the two words the murmurers thought incompatible, "gracious and merciful" and "just in all his ways". St Hilary of Poitiers explains how both can be said: *habet dei iustitia miserandi voluntatem*, God's justice has the will to show mercy, and is not thereby so changed as to cease to be justice, whereas human justice commonly arrives at being unmerciful (*Tractatus super Psalmos* 144.14). Hilary speaks of the psalm and not of the parable, but his sentence describes the householder's two dealings: with the first he keeps his contract, which is justice as St Robert Bellarmine glosses the psalm's seventeenth verse, "he renders to all what is due to them"; with the last he is generous, and takes nothing from his justice.

The contract remains, and it is the third interpretation's strongest difficulty. The first-hired are paid on an agreement, so the parable does not say that no one earns anything. Augustine keeps this, "To the first, it is a payment; to the other, a free gift" (87.6); 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, *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 (Lev 18:5, in the form cited at Rom 10:5; PL 26, 142). Augustine resolves the tension only in his comment on the psalm, *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), and that goes beyond what the parable states.

“So shall the last be first”

The Lectionary ends the Gospel on the saying about first and last, and the witnesses do not agree how it stands to the parable it closes. For Augustine it states the parable’s equality: first and last are made equal “by equality of treatment, not by inverting their order” (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”, 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 (64.4). Jerome makes the saying the key: the parable is understood from the same saying at 19:30, and the Lord ranks *non tempori . . . sed fidei*, not by time but by faith (PL 26, 140–142). Aquinas records both of the first two senses.

What the wage is

All three interpretations take the denarius as eternal life. The first asks whether it can be equal. “That denarius is life eternal, and in the life eternal all will be equal”, Augustine says; the saints will differ in brightness, 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.

The third asks what that life consists in. Of the coin itself Jerome says, *Denarius figuram regis habet*, the denarius bears the figure of the king: you have received the wage I promised you, *hoc est, imaginem et similitudinem meam*, that is, my image and likeness; what more do you seek? (PL 26, 142). Two other witnesses say what the last reward is, each of his own text and neither of the parable. At the psalm’s promise that the Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth, Augustine 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? (*Enarrationes* 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 (*Homiliae* 14.5). A reward of that kind cannot be divided into a larger and a smaller sum.

The second reading shows a labourer for whom the wage is a person. No Father read connects Paul’s dilemma with the parable, and his place in each interpretation comes from the letter. For the first he is the labourer sent to the nations, in Augustine’s words “specially sent as an apostle to the Gentiles” (*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 47.5), at work for a church of the last hour. For the second he measures life by its fruit: the present life is needful, Chrysostom says, “if we bear fruit; since if it be unfruitful, it is no longer life” (*Homilies on Philippians* 3). For the third he shows why a man who holds his wage asks for a longer day. Aquinas distinguishes two loves of God: by one a man wants to enjoy God, which is the man’s own good; by the other he *praeponit honorem Dei, etiam huic delectationi, qua fruitur Deo*, puts God’s honour before even the delight of enjoying him, and this is perfect charity (*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” (*Homilies on Philippians* 4). The murmurers reckon their hours against the late comers; Paul adds hours for their sake.

Whose work is the coming? The opened heart and the psalmist's wish

Before the Gospel the assembly asks the Lord to open its heart, and each interpretation hears the petition differently. The first gives the assembly a place with Lydia, a Gentile who worshipped God in a Roman colony. For St Bede she signifies the Church, which received with the inward devotion of the heart the preaching that the Jews had driven away (*Retractatio in Actus apostolorum* 16, PL 92, 1025). The second hears a request for the hearing in which conversion begins; Augustine opens his sermon on the parable with the God who does not cease “to open our heart, as it were, by the plough of His Word” (87.1).

The third carries its claim two steps further. The first step is that the keeping of the commandments is itself to be asked of God, and the first Communion antiphon is its text. The psalmist does not say that he has kept what God commanded; he says *Utinam*, “O! that”. Who, Augustine asks, 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 (*Enarrationes* 118, s. 4.2, PL 37, 1510). Hilary says the same of the same verse: unless we are directed by God we shall be weak by our nature (*Tractatus* 118, Aleph 12); the second interpretation hears in the same wish the convert's own prayer. The Collect prays in the same manner, for the keeping of the precepts and the arriving at life both stand inside a prayer.

The second step, that the first opening of the heart is God's gift, only Augustine states among the authors read. From St Paul's request that God “may open unto us a door of speech” (Col 4:3) he argues 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”, and Lydia is his example: “she was so called that she might believe” (*De praedestinatione sanctorum* 20.41). His argument is made from Colossians, with the verse of Acts as its instance, and the petition of the Alleluia verse is the Lectionary's adaptation and not Luke's wording. Chrysostom, preaching through Luke's narrative, reads the verse differently: “Therefore we need God, to open the heart: but God opens the hearts that are willing: for there are hardened hearts to be seen”; and, “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. On the parable he says that “the difference was made by the disposition of them that were called” (64.3), and Augustine's sermon on it does not take up why some come late. The two therefore meet only at Acts 16:14, and the difference between their readings of it is real. The second step rests on Augustine's argument and on no agreement between the two. Their different readings of Acts touch neither the first step nor the third interpretation's opening claim, which Chrysostom states for himself.

The shepherd, and the prayers at the altar

The second Communion antiphon sets beside the householder another figure who does not calculate. Gregory glosses its verb, *cognosco oves meas, hoc est diligo*, I know my sheep, that is, I love them (14.3). The first interpretation listens to the antiphon's context and not to the appointed verse: “other sheep I have that are not of this fold” (10:16). Gregory hears there the redemption of us who have come from the Gentile people, and one fold made out of two flocks (14.4). The second hears Gregory's examination of conscience, *Videte si oves eius estis*, see whether you are his sheep, and know him not by belief but by deed (14.4). The third hears a shepherd who gives what no contract could oblige. He laid down his life *ut in sacramento nostro corpus suum et sanguinem verteret*, that he might turn his body and blood into our sacrament (14.1), where the hireling feeds the sheep for temporal wages (14.2); the labourer who counts his hours against his neighbour's has taken the hireling's view of the vineyard. Aquinas explains the possessive, *meae, inquam, praedestinatione, vocatione, et gratia*, mine by predestination, calling and grace (*Super Ioannem* c. 10, lect. 4).

The Missal's prayers are patient of all three hearings. They take their places by their own wording; the placing is the editor's, not a commentator's. The Entrance Antiphon speaks of one people and one Lord;

its promise to hear is the ground on which a late cry, even the thief's, is not refused; and in it God names himself his people's salvation before anything is asked of them. The Collect gathers the law given to the first-hired into two loves asked of every labourer at every hour, and since Chrysostom's vineyard is "the injunctions of God and His commandments", it asks for labour in the vineyard and the denarius at evening. The Prayer over the Offerings speaks of one people's gifts, *tuae plebis*, completes at the altar the turning that began in hearing, and reverses the direction of giving, since what is professed is to be received. The Prayer after Communion names the one wage already begun, asks the proof of conduct, *et moribus*, and asks a help that is continual and no wage paid once.

Where the four senses part

The literal sense is common ground, and the allegorical sense is where the interpretations part. For the first the day is the history of salvation, and the householder who "went out" is Christ made known to the nations after Pentecost, as Augustine says (87.9). For the second the hours are the ages of a life, and the thief is the labourer of the eleventh hour, as Gregory says. For the third the householder's goodness is the goodness of Christ, the good shepherd, and the likeness given to each labourer alike is Christ; of the coin Jerome says only that the wage is the king's image and likeness. The moral senses follow: do not resent those who arrive late; turn today, neither despairing of the past nor presuming on a tomorrow no one has promised; work without reckoning, and rejoice at another's undeserved good. The anagogical senses differ in what the evening is: the end of the world, when all the just receive the resurrection together; each person's death, whose day God has hidden in mercy; and the wage itself, God giving himself. 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.

Appendix: Scope and Qualifications

Edition, formulary and occurrence. This concise 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*, no. 133, give it for the dioceses of the United States, in the national calendar alone, for the occurrence of 20 September 2026. The antiphons and orations serve Years A, B and C; the readings, psalm and Alleluia verse are Year A's. Both Communion antiphons are treated.

Relation to the expansive study. Every claim here is drawn from the canonical study of this same formulary, which prints the appointed Scripture and develops the three interpretations at length, each with its own literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical senses; nothing evidence-dependent is added. The four rows on the first page orient a reader and do not replace those distillations. The second page reprints the study's dossier with the dates, relation labels, alternatives and unresolved states exactly as the generated chronology record gives them.

Text and English. The Missal formulary was read for the study in the Latin of the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (2002), in a digitally typeset reproduction; no United States altar book was inspected, so the approved English orations were not read in any witness. The Lectionary's boundaries rest on 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. 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. All Scripture is quoted 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; the descriptions are not translations and may not be quoted as the prayers' words. English glosses of patristic Latin not drawn from a named translation render the Latin beside them.

Reception and its limits. The witnesses named are those the study's bounded search read at the loci in the References. Chrysostom was 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 in an electronic Latin text; Jerome, Bede, Hilary and Aquinas on page images of the printings named, except that of Aquinas on Matthew only p. 262 and two sentences of pp. 258–261 were read on the page, so that what is reported from those four pages is paraphrased. Of Augustine's *Enarrationes*, 118, s. 4.2 and 144.11 were read on the columns of Migne, and 144.22 rests on the electronic text of *augustinus.it* alone. Bellarmine was read in a transcription of O'Sullivan's abridged English of 1866, and the Latin was not compared. No witness was collated with a

modern critical edition. 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. No commentary on the orations or on the Entrance Antiphon was sought, and no witness cited comments on this Mass. The liturgical books state three relations among its elements (*Praenotanda* 106; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 61, 62), and that the Alleluia verse's basis and the second reading both concern Philippi is an observation about the texts. Every other connection between one element and another is synthesis, grounded in a witness's statement about his own passage where one is cited and otherwise resting on the wording of the texts.

Chronology, rights and records. 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`. The Scripture, patristic and encyclopedia texts quoted are in the public domain, Gregory's Latin being quoted in short phrases from a licensed electronic edition; the liturgical books, the *Nova Vulgata* and the New American Bible introduction are protected and are cited, with only incipits, the three titles of the *Ordo* and a few words of the Latin books quoted. The audits are `propers/verified.md`, `research/scope.md`, `research/interpretations.md` and, for this companion's production, `research/production-review.md`.

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