

HOMILY for 25th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's First Reading & Gospel discuss about God's plan; & as I reflect on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

Old Mrs. Watkins awoke one spring morning to find that the river had flooded not only her basement but the entire first floor of her house. Looking out her bedroom window, she saw that the water is still rising. Two men passing by in a rowboat shouted up an invitation to row her to safety with them.

"No, thank you," replied Mrs. Watkins tartly. "The Lord will provide." The men shrugged & rowed on.

By the evening the water level forced Mrs. Watkins to climb out on her roof where she was spotted by a cheerful man in a motorboat. "Don't worry, lady," he called across the water. "I'll pick you right up."

"Please don't trouble yourself – the Lord will provide." Mrs. Watkins then turned her back on her would-be rescuer, who buzzed off down the river.

Pretty soon Mrs. Watkins was forced to take refuge atop her chimney, the only part of the house still above water. Fortunately, a Red Cross cutter came by on patrol. "Jump in, mam," urged a rescue worker.

Mrs. Watkins shook her head vehemently. "The Lord will provide." So, the boat departed, the water rose, & the old woman drowned.

Dripping wet & thoroughly annoyed, she came through the Pearly Gates & demanded to speak to God. "What happened?" She cried. "I thought the Lord would provide."

"For crying out loud, lady," said God wearily, "I sent you 3 boats!"

It's hard to see God's plan for us, isn't it? Anyway, people usually come to Church or a sacred place to pray for something. Or, when they face challenges in their lives, they'd come & ask God for help. That's why, after a tragic event like September 11, churches & other worship places were filled with the faithful & visitors. People want to find comfort & reassurance from God after a sad & scary incident like that. People also come to Church & sacred places for one more reason, namely, to discern God's plan for their lives. That's why priests, nuns, & many of the faithful spend time in prayer to figure out God's plan for them & for the world. In fact, Jesus stayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to discern the plan of God the Father for Him & said, "Father, if it's your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." Realizing how important it is for us to learn & understand God's plan, today's First Reading advises us, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call on Him while he is near.... For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord."

Prophet Isaiah urges us to seek the Lord while we still have a chance & call on Him while He's still near us. Many of us are procrastinators; we wait till the last minutes to do our tasks. We must look for the Lord now & form a relationship with Him. If we wait for a tragedy to happen & come to the Lord for help, it might be difficult for us to see His way & understand His plan. Perhaps one of the hardest things for God's people to do throughout the Bible besides following God's Commandments is to figure out God's plan for them. They often got distracted by worldly things & foreign customs. Many of them began to follow foreign gods & abandon their faithful God & Jewish tradition. The Lord had to send prophets like Elijah & leaders like Moses to show God's people God's plan for them. Even Peter & the early Church failed to

understand God's plan of salvation through the Cross of Jesus. Only later did they realize it with the empty tomb & appearances of the risen Christ.

Perhaps what makes God's plan quite intimidating for most people is how mysterious it is. They're baffled & frustrated to learn about God's plan. In case you've not encountered God's plan before, today's Gospel gives us a taste of it as it shares the story of a landowner who goes out to hire laborers for his vineyard. He goes out at different time of the day: at dawn, 9am, noon, 3pm, & 5pm to recruit workers for his vineyard. Everyone agreed to work for the usual daily wage with this verbal contract, "You go into my vineyard, & I will give you what is just." After everyone has done their work, the owner tells his foreman at the end of the day, "Summon the laborers & give them their pay, beginning with the last & ending with the first."

I don't know about you, but that's not how our human justice system measures fairness. If we give out something beginning with the last person & ending with the first, people would not like it. Furthermore, if we pay the last worker the same as the first one who has been there much longer, the public would not think that's a fair system. For the first worker usually assumes to get paid more than the last one. But, here's the owner's reply to the first worker, "My friend, I'm not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours & go. What if I wish to give the last worker the same as you? Am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous? Thus, the last will be first, & the first will be last." That's part of God's mysterious plan for us to think about.

As you can see, divine justice which is based on generosity & compassion will challenge our current justice system which is built on "selfishness, envy, & uncaring" to change. Unfortunately, if we look at our country & around the world, we'll how native people slowly reject refugees or immigrants & don't want to share God's blessings to them & be generous to the poor & the outcast. Meanwhile, the rich get richer & care very little on how the poor might survive. It is that greedy, selfish, & uncaring system that today's Gospel wants to change. Certainly our Holy Father talks a lot about caring for the marginalized & sharing with the poor in his teachings. So, if there's one thing we learn about God's plan, it'd be this. When we're generous & compassionate, our plan will be closer to God's. We'll understand & appreciate God's plan much better. In God's mysterious plan, everyone will look out for one's neighbors more than for oneself.

My dear brothers & sisters, God's plan is surely mysterious & incomprehensible. But, that's what we need to conform our will to & the key for our happy & peaceful life here on earth. It's also the roadmap for us to get to Heaven. Like my relationship with the Bishop & the Pope, I can resist to their ways all I want. But, at the end of the day, it's futile for me to go against their ways. Similarly, God's way/plan will outlast ours in the end. So, we better hop on board & follow God's way/plan for us.