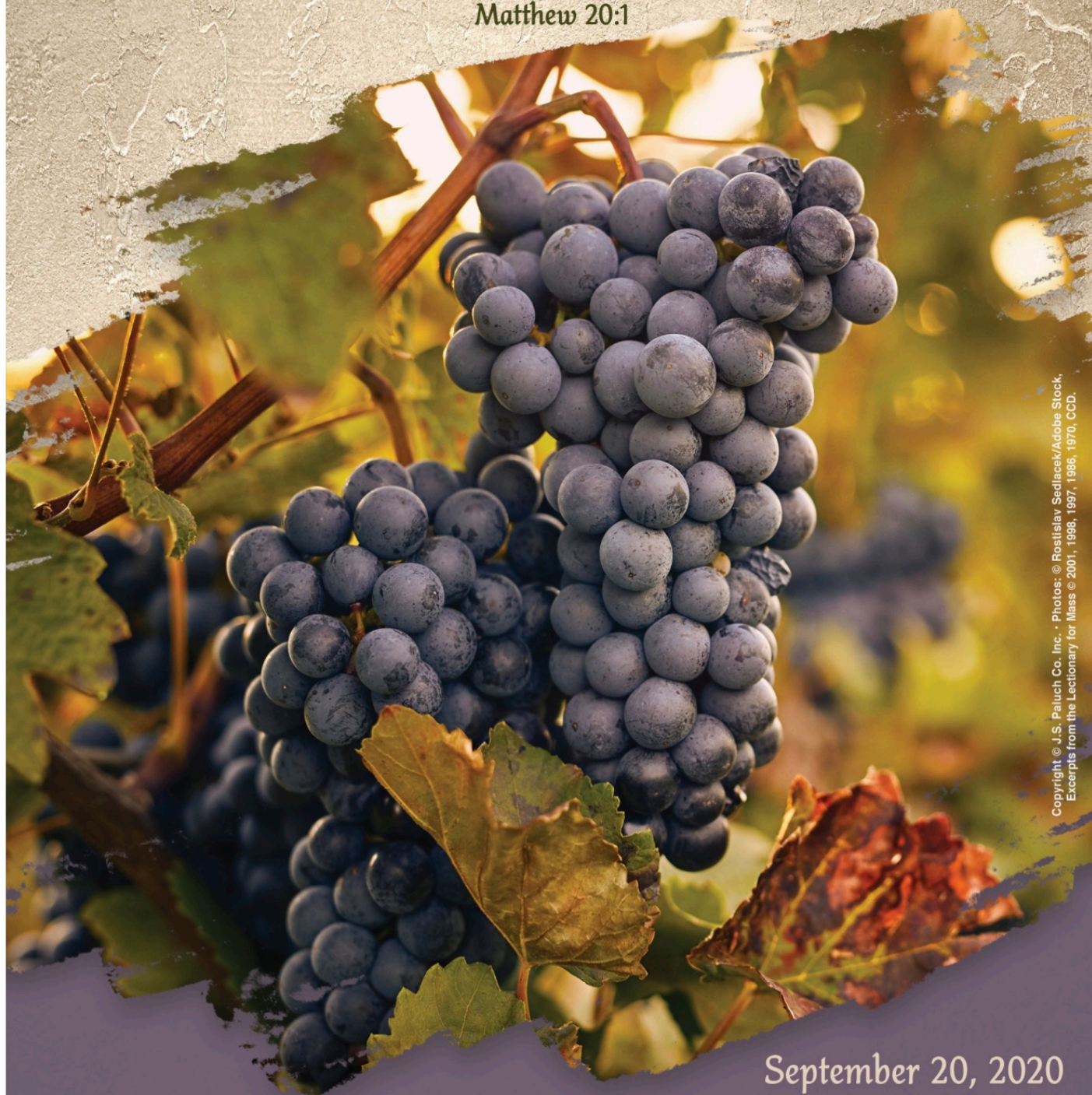


The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner  
who went out at dawn  
to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Matthew 20:1



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September 20, 2020

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

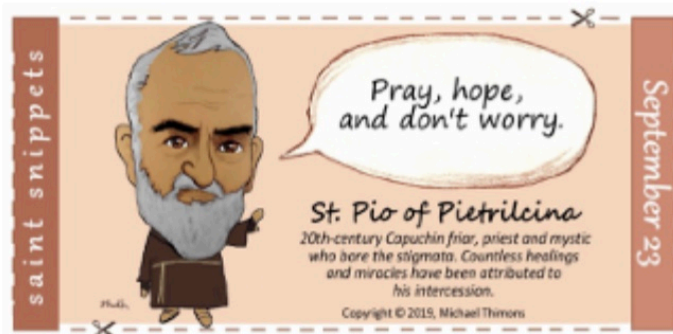


## *Saint Pius of Pietrelcina* (1887-1968)

September 23

Did the World War II American flyer really see Padre Pio in midair, preventing the bombing of his village below? Did Pio actually “bilocate” in Italy, the Holy Land, even America, as countless witnesses testified? Or “read hearts” before penitents spoke? What of the stigmata, Christ’s wounds imprinted on Padre Pio’s hands, feet, and side? John Paul II, who as a young man visited Pio, never mentioned these extraordinary elements at the canonization. Instead, the pope spoke of “trials accepted with love,” referring perhaps to sanctions restricting Pio’s faculties for hearing confessions and celebrating public Mass, imposed because of criticism, later discredited, sent to the Vatican; of Pio’s offering his sufferings in union with Jesus’ passion for a suffering world; of his continual availability to sinners seeking direction and absolution; of Padre Pio’s prayer that blossomed in charity, especially through his House for the Relief of Suffering, a healthcare facility that anticipated by decades today’s holistic partnering of medical science and spirituality. Finally, how comforting for us ordinary Christians, this extraordinary saint’s most frequent advice: “Pray, hope, and don’t worry!”

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



### *Direction*

Isaiah tells us something that we already know, and yet seem to forget every now and then. He tells us, essentially, that God is God and we are not. When we’re confused and troubled and can’t figure everything out, it might be wise to recall Isaiah speaking on the Lord’s behalf and explaining that God—who is on a much more, well, Godly wavelength than we are—moves in ways we can’t even imagine.

Saint Paul, by comparison, has everything figured out. Kind of. At least he understands his calling in life—to magnify Christ in everything he does. That should give all of us the direction we need. Jesus gives us direction, too, explaining to us once again in the parable of the workers in the vineyard that the last will be first, and the first, last. Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

### *Readings for the Week*

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Monday:</b>    | Eph 4:1-7, 11-13; Ps 19:2-5; Mt 9:9-13                         |
| <b>Tuesday:</b>   | Prv 21:1-6, 10-13;<br>Ps 119:1, 27, 30, 34, 35, 44; Lk 8:19-21 |
| <b>Wednesday:</b> | Prv 30:5-9;<br>Ps 119:29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163;<br>Lk 9:1-6   |
| <b>Thursday:</b>  | Eccl 1:2-11; Ps 90:3-6, 12-14, 17bc;<br>Lk 9:7-9               |
| <b>Friday:</b>    | Eccl 3:1-11; Ps 144:1b, 2abc, 3-4;<br>Lk 9:18-22               |
| <b>Saturday:</b>  | Eccl 11:9 — 12:8; Ps 90:3-6, 12-14, 17;<br>Lk 9:43b-45         |
| <b>Sunday:</b>    | Ez 18:25-28; Ps 25:4-9; Phil 2:1-11<br>[1-5]; Mt 21:28-32      |

### *Saints and Special Observances*

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Sunday:</b>    | Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time          |
| <b>Monday:</b>    | St. Matthew                                   |
| <b>Tuesday:</b>   | Autumn begins                                 |
| <b>Wednesday:</b> | St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)           |
| <b>Saturday:</b>  | Ss. Cosmas and Damian;<br>Blessed Virgin Mary |

### *Autumn*

Listen! The wind is rising,  
and the air is wild with leaves,  
We have had our summer evenings,  
now for October eves!

—Humbert Wolfe

### *Humility*

No human being is too big to be humble, but some human beings are too small.

—Anonymous

### *Today’s Readings*

First Reading — Turn to the LORD who is generous in forgiving (Isaiah 55:6-9).

Psalm — The Lord is near to all who call upon him (Psalm 145).

Second Reading — Live your lives in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a).

Gospel — The last will be first, and the first will be last (Matthew 20:1-16a).

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## Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 20, 2020

Turn to the Lord for mercy;  
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.

—Isaiah 55:7b

### *Treasures From Our Tradition*

Over time, the severe form of one-chance penance collapsed under lack of enthusiasm for its burdens and its public nature. As ordinary Christians prayed for the great sinners, it must have occurred to them that they were sinners no less, and they required a form of penance also. The Irish came to the rescue, never having had a public form of penance, but inventing a system called “tariff penance,” which was completely private, available to everyone, and wildly popular. After a detailed confession, priest and penitent would lie on the floor before the altar and recite a number of psalms. The priest then pronounced a judgment, a tariff, giving a task or a prayer to complete before reconciliation.

The surviving guidebooks for confessors make for hair-raising reading as the sins of which the Irish people were supposedly capable were catalogued and keyed to penances. Cattle or sheep rustling might require stripping down to sing psalms in an icy brook, for example, or adultery could be the occasion for rolling in a thicket of thorns. All of this might have stayed in Ireland had not the monks had a desire to travel, blazing across Europe with their theology and their rituals, and their sense that Christians needed strong medicine for sin and the assurance of God’s forgiveness.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Children are usually still quite young the first time they have occasion to shout, “That’s not fair!” At some point in our lives, we’ve probably all felt the bitterness of unfairness. Today’s readings agree that life isn’t always fair—yet, unexpectedly, invite us to rejoice! We rejoice because God’s mercy is totally unfair: God lavishes us with forgiveness and love even when we deserve less. Both the reading from Isaiah and the psalm praise the great mercy of God, mercy that forgives our sins over and over. In the Gospel parable, Jesus demonstrates that God longs to give good things to all of us, even to those who seem less worthy. When Saint Paul reflects on God’s goodness, embodied in Jesus Christ, he can hardly wait to enter his heavenly reward.

### *An Unexpected Lesson*

Jesus’ parable depicts workers who “punch the clock” at various times throughout the long day: dawn, nine, noon, three, and five o’clock. Regardless of when they began working in the vineyard, the laborers all receive the same reward. The reward seems lavish to the latecomers, of course, and shockingly unfair to the long-faithful workers. The landowner soothes his most dutiful laborers, however, delighting in them as friends and transforming their bitter confrontation into a reflection on generosity. The laborers who arrived at five o’clock might have been late to the job, but those who began at the crack of dawn were last to understand the extravagant bounty of the landowner. Seen in this way, the parable discusses not

only God’s generosity toward “unworthy” believers, but also the Lord’s inexhaustible patience toward those who thought they had nothing more to learn.

### *Beginning Again*

Today’s readings provide sweet refreshment to all of us who know the bitterness of discouragement. No matter how stubbornly we determine to improve ourselves, the human condition often leaves us in puddles of failure and regret. Jesus has a new plan for us. Today’s Gospel parable demonstrates the mercy of God, mercy that rejoices in fresh beginnings. We take comfort in knowing that God accompanies us in our labors—and works for us—whether we struggle with caring for our bodies, striving for patience, avoiding gossip, making time for prayer, being generous, overcoming addiction, remaining in recovery, or simply attending to our daily work. Jesus shows us that he actively engages with us each time we fall short. From dawn to dusk, the Lord seeks us out, calling us to join him in the vineyard. Now, today, right this moment, is our dawn. Or our nine o’clock. Or noon? Ignore the clock! Jesus invites us to forget past failures; divine mercy wipes them away. Today’s psalm insists that the “Lord is near to all who call upon him.” In hope, then, we begin again.

Today’s Readings: Is 55:6–9; Ps 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18;  
Phil 1:20c–24, 27a; Mt 20:1–16a

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**Sunday Readings**  
**September 20, 2020**  
**Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading 1**

**Is 55:6–9**

Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call him while he is near.  
Let the scoundrel forsake his way,  
and the wicked his thoughts;  
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;  
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
As high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so high are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Ps 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18**

**R. (18a) The Lord is near to all who call upon him.**

Every day will I bless you,  
and I will praise your name forever and ever.  
Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.

**R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.**

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.  
The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works.

**R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.**

The LORD is just in all his ways  
and holy in all his works.  
The LORD is near to all who call upon him,  
to all who call upon him in truth.

**R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.**

**Reading 2**

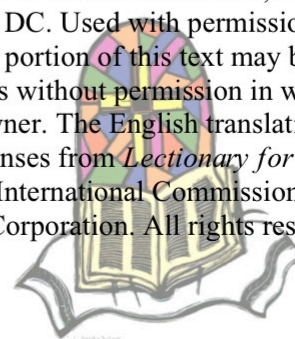
**Phil 1:20c–24, 27a**

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.

**Gospel**  
**Mt 20:1–16a**

Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’ When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or 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, and the first will be last.”

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# Letters from Heaven



Start with the letter in the shaded square. Draw a path from letter to letter to complete the Biblical statement. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left and diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any black squares.

Jesus said, "The last will be first, and the ..."

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| L | A | T | ■ |
| E | S | T | S |
| B | L | R | W |
| F | I | L | I |

F \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ . "

Answer: *The last will be first*

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