

NEEDS OR WANTS

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE A

Ezekiel 18:25-28
Philippians 2:1-11
Matthew 21:28-32

OPENING PRAYER

The community plays or sings, "Here I Am Lord". The community prays in two alternating groups.

- I. O my Divine Savior, transform me into yourself.
- II. May my hands be the hands of Jesus.
- I. May my tongue be the tongue of Jesus.
- II. Grant that every faculty of my body may serve only to glorify you.
- I. Above all, transform my soul and all its powers that my memory, my will and my affections may be the memory, the will and the affections of Jesus.
- II. I pray you to destroy in me all that is not of you.
- I. Grant that I may live but in you and by you and for you
- II. that I may truly say with St. Paul:

All: "I live now, not I, but Christ who lives in me."

Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M. From *Let's Pray* by Brother Charles Reutemann F.S.C. (Winona, MN: St. Mary Press, 1975), p. 85. Used with permission.

COMMENTARY

The Israelites have said to Ezekiel, "The Lord's way is not fair!" Ezekiel answers, speaking for God, "Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?" The gospel tells us the story of a very patient father, who does not seem to be able to count on either of his sons. He could very easily have said, "Life is not fair." Many people today could say the same thing. People in Africa, South America, throughout our own country could say, "It is not fair. Some people have everything, and we have nothing." And to make matters worse, the poor are so often unfairly blamed for their own plight. "It's their own fault," we sometimes hear, "they should pull themselves together and earn a living." But blaming the innocent victim only makes things doubly unfair.

Last winter **The Hartford Courant** invited its readers to write in with any wish they had. People listed all kinds of things, both for themselves and for others. Some were needs, but many were wants. And then there was the little boy who just said, "I wish I had a bed."

So, in the great scheme of things, what is fair? Who is fair? How fair are we? In the gospel, one son came through, the other did not. The ambivalence of it all is reflected in our own hearts. Our God, however, is more than fair. God is faithful! Being faithful to God who calls us to be faithful to one another, not in every want perhaps, but at the level of deepest need, that is God's notion of what it means for us to be fair.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. When have you promised to do something and not followed through?
2. Tell of a time when you said "no" to someone who needed you, but

you came through just the same. What changed your mind or heart?

3. How fair a person are you?
4. How well can God count on you to come through?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Make it a point to notice how you respond to requests for help this week. Say what you mean. Mean what you say.
2. Reach out this week to someone who has needed your help, but whom you have resisted helping.
3. Set aside fifteen minutes of quiet time this week. Make a list of the good things God is doing in your life these days. Pray in thanksgiving for God's faithfulness to you.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader calls the community to some time of silence.)

Leader: Keep us, O God, from all pettiness,
 Let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.
 Let us be done with fault-finding
 and leave off all self-seeking.
 May we put away all pretense
 and meet each other face to face,
 without self-pity and without prejudice.
 May we never be hasty in judgment,
 and always generous.
 Let us always take time for all things,
 and make us grow calm, serene and gentle.
 Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
 to be straightforward and unafraid.
 Grant that we may realize

that it is the little things of life that create
differences,
that in the big things of life
we are as one.
And, O God, let us not forget to be kind! Amen.

Queen Mary Stuart; as found in **The Fire of Peace**. Used with
permission of Pax Christi, U.S.A.

*(Members pair off. Each member of a pair rests a hand on the other and
offers a prayer of blessing for the other. All exchange a sign of peace.)*

