

Sunday Thought

20th September 2020 25 in Ordinary Time

Readings

Exodus 16: 2 - 15

Psalms 105: 1 – 6, 37 - 45

Philippians 1: 21 - 30

Matthew 20: 1 - 16

Job Prospects



My picture (from the Tullie House collection) is of a Victorian Hiring Fair in Carlisle. The young woman is being given a coin to seal the hiring agreement. I am just old enough to have listened to the memories of men and women who had personal memories of seeking work at the Mop Fair where domestic and agricultural labourers were engaged for a fixed term and wage. I learn how that means of finding employment derives from Edward III in the fourteenth century. His scheme followed the plague, when the problem was a shortage of labour rather than of regular job opportunities. At the moment the picture is a reminder of the present and looming employment problems we face in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic.

Unemployment figures are rising and it is likely there will be a whole sea of people needing our prayers and practical support. Already a considerable number of people have had to make changes in their work/life patterns. Others are contemplating career changes. Loss of jobs inevitably brings the anxieties of paying rent and feeding the family. Then there are desperate emotional problems, like the sense of failure and futility, which often give way to associated social and domestic issues surrounding unemployment.

These thoughts followed on from Jesus' parable in today's gospel reading from Matthew. It too is a picture of a hiring fair at harvest time. I hasten to say that it is not meant to be a pattern for employment then or now. Just imagine the protests about unfair pay, the Trade Union resolutions and undoubtedly an uproar in Parliament!

