

**OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**  
**SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL**  
**WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER**  
**Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 24, 2023**



The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel

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**CHAPEL SCHEDULE**

*Weekday Mass:* (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

*Weekend Masses:* Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

*Holiday Mass Schedule:* afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

*Confessions:* First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

*Department Telephone:* 508.363.6246

*Chapel Website:* [www.ourladyofprovidence.net](http://www.ourladyofprovidence.net)

## **MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE**

Saturday, September 23 *Vigil of the 25th Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm Sr. Mary O'Leary, SP & deceased members of the O'Leary Family—by her niece

Sunday, September 24 *Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +Kathleen Loftus by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

4:00pm +Felice & George Burns

Monday, September 25 Jewish Yom Kippur

12:00nn For the healing of a family

Tuesday, September 26 *Ss. Cosmas Damian, martyrs*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn +Edward Lucjan and Stanislaw Janeczek

Wednesday, September 27 *Saint Vincent-de-Paul, priest*<sup>1</sup>

12:00nn For the intentions of the Hadley family by VM

Thursday, September 28 *Ss. Wenceslaus, martyr & Lawrence of Ruiz & companions, martyrs*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn Asking God for Kathy's health

Friday, September 29 *Feast of the Archangels: Michael, Gabriel & Raphael*

12:00nn +Brandon Nuzzolio

Saturday, September 30 *Vigil of the 26th Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Lucille Cunic by her children

Sunday, October 1 *Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am For a special intention

4:00pm +Dr. Anne Brown by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**<sup>1</sup> or an **optional memorial**<sup>2</sup>.

### **Toward a Better Understanding of This Sunday's Gospel**

The parable of the workers in the vineyard is unique to Saint Matthew's Gospel and begins with the landowner (Gk. οἰκοδεσπότης, lit. the master of the house) going out at dawn, nine o'clock, noon, and five o'clock. The evangelist elaborates on these hiring practices in order to heighten the listeners' curiosity as to what will happen when evening comes and those workers will be paid. Easily overlooked, though, is the reference that the laborers are being hired to work in a vineyard (Gk. ἀμπελών), which in both testaments is often used to designate God's people. Its emphatic use in this passage underscores the comparison made in the opening verse – "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard." The master of the house behaves like the shepherd who goes out in search of the one lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14). The lectionary, instead of the passage of the hours, whether in day or night, renders those hours in a way that understandable to modern Westerners by saying that the hiring took place at nine o'clock, noon, three o'clock, and five o'clock. The ancient Jews allotted time not from midnight but from sunrise. Thus, the hours of the day began at dawn and continued through to the sixth hour (which was about mid-day) and until the twelfth hour (about sunset). The hours of the night were generally calculated according to four watches: First watch of the night (9pm), second (12mn), third (3am) until about 6am or the night's fourth watch; however, there were often only three watches in the summer months when the nights were shorter. Though, here, time of the day is not the question, it is the method of paying the vineyard workers which appears outrageous – the last hired are the first paid who receive "the usual daily wage" or a silver coin known as a denarius, which at that time was worth about 15 or 20 cents. Those hired first, after seeing what those late-comers received, expected much more. Instead, the landowner instructed the paymaster to give those who started to work at dawn the same one silver coin. As to be expected, those who had worked all day and who had born "the day's burden and the heat" complained about what they perceived to be unfair treatment. The central issue is not justice or equity because the parable is meant to illustrate the other-worldly reality of the Kingdom of heaven. Justice and equitable pay were already enshrined in the Mosaic Law and, so, the parable had to aim at another lesson. By giving the workers that he hired at dawn the agreed upon salary, the landowner was not cheating those hired at the first hour or 6am. It is not a salary dispute as much as their grumbling is prompted by the fact that those hired at five o'clock (or the eleventh hour) were paid the same as those hired in the first hour of the day. In

### Saint John Chrysostom

"If any be pious and God-loving, let him enjoy this fair and radiant solemnity. If any be a wise servant, let him enter rejoicing into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored in fasting, let him receive now his denarius. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him receive today his just due. If any have come after the third hour, let him feast with thankfulness. If any have arrived after the sixth hour, let him doubt nothing, for he will in no way suffer loss.

If any have come later than even the ninth hour, let him draw nigh, doubting nothing, fearing nothing.

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replying to their grumbling, the master reminds them of their original agreement to work all day for the typical day's pay or for that one silver coin (Gk. δηνάριον). In fact, it is the master's generosity that prompts their envy not any claim they made in regard to being unjustly treated. The vineyard owner went out at dawn and because he saw men sitting idly in the marketplace, due to the master's goodness, he hired them to go to work in his vineyard "for the usual daily wage." Then, in his eminent kindness, he offered to pay them one silver coin which he did. Yet, instead of gratitude for a day's work and its accompanying wage, greed dangled its temptation in front of those earliest laborers instead of rejoicing that the last hired received the same salary as they did. Whether it is the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son or, here, in regard to those workers hired first, in each case, those who complain against God's generosity are upbraided for their selfishness. Understood in heavenly terms, then, there is no need to pursue more because all that is received is from divine kindness and not due to personal merit or effort. Whatever the share in His goodness that the Lord God showers upon anyone, whether the blessing entailed and the service which is its prerequisite, the disciples who fail to see that interrelationship go badly astray and the reaction befuddles the fact that any relationship with God is based upon the great commandment – to love God and to love our neighbor as Christ loved us. The Gospel's concluding verse that "...the last will be first, and the first will be last" is not a summary of divine priorities in how God metes out His blessings. And, equally not the case, the last were paid first in order that those who were hired at dawn could know that the master was innately generous. Likewise not true is the selfish conclusion that late-comers will find themselves ahead of all others. Self-satisfaction is derided throughout Saint Matthew's gospel. The last hired are the first paid, whereas the first hired are the last paid. The landowner's generosity is not meant to be a slap in the face to those who worked all day; no, the parable's focus is on the good fortune of the last hired. At the outset, the master did not discuss what he would pay the late-comer, as he did with those hired first. Faced with most of the day earning nothing, these hired at different times of the day go into the vineyard blindly trusting in the master's willingness to pay them whatever he deemed to be fair. He alone would determine what was fair for only working a few hours in the later or cooler part of the day. The last hired constitute the ideal servants who ask for nothing and who gratefully accept the master's generosity, so, these last are really the first. Those hired first had the good fortune to know that a day's wages would be theirs at the end of the day. At dawn, the master determined he would pay them one silver coin and they agreed. Their behavior, at the end of the day, revealed their true selves – jealous of their fellow workers and grumbling because God, who is the vineyard owner, is generous to a fault, since He is goodness personified. The parable leaves its hearers to wonder, though we are all God's servants, what kind of servants are we really?

#### National Eucharistic Revival - Phase Two: The Diocesan Year

Every time, anyone prays the Lord's Prayer, we ask God the Father to "give us each day our daily bread" and the bread requested is a sign of "the pledge of God's faithfulness to his promises" (CCC, n. 1334) and, moreover, "bread and wine were offered among the first fruits of the earth". In the midst of the trials of life and on our way towards the "promised land" (Heaven), in our thanksgiving to God for every blessing, it is bread that always sustains us physically and reminds us of God's closeness. The gift of wine or "the fruit of the vine" is also an essential part of salvation history. While there was an offering of bread in the Old Testament, so, too, there was an offering of wine, which was often referred to as the *cup of blessing*. At the conclusion of the Jewish Passover meal, this *cup* "was added to the festive joy of wine another, more eschatological dimension: the messianic expectation of the rebuilding of Jerusalem." We also see, in Jesus' very first public miracle—the Wedding Feast at Cana—the centrality of wine, where Jesus transforms water into wine, but not just any ordinary wine, but the very best wine possible for a festivity. Known as the first of the Lord's signs, Cana is a miracle that takes place at a joyful, wedding feast. Bread and wine are used, routinely, for the celebration of the Eucharist for several reasons: First and foremost because Jesus said to do just that. Then, as the staff of life, bread points to the continual sustenance that is received from the Lord and such spiritual growth is the result of cooperation with His grace. Wine points us not only to joy but, even further than human emotion is, to the eschatological end or the feast in heaven. As embodied souls, a compilation of body and soul: bread sustains the body and wine sustains the soul. Saint Justin Martyr said, "This food is known among us as the Eucharist. We do not receive these things as common bread and common drink but as Jesus Christ, our Savior, being made flesh by the word of God."



# Hesed - Eleos - Misericordia: In English as Mercy or Love

## Introduction

Though some biblical scholars deny the opposition between the wrathful, judging God of the Old Testament versus the gracious, loving God of the New Testament, too many people are still guilty of propagating that notion by neglecting the Old Testament's own witness to God's character and, especially, to His grace. The central figure of the entire Bible is God and we must be attentive to the many ways that God has revealed Himself throughout history. To attend to God's character in the Old Testament, it is crucial to begin with this divine self-description, a biblical reference which emphasizes God's grace: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [hesed] and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love [hesed] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex 34:6-7).

## Varied Meaning of the Hebrew Word Hesed

In an excessively-long footnote (fn. 52) to the encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, you find this, "In describing mercy, the books of the Old Testament use two expressions in particular, each having a different semantic nuance. First there is the term hesed, which indicates a profound attitude of 'goodness.' When this is established between two individuals, they do not just wish each other well; they are also faithful to each other by virtue of an interior commitment, and therefore also by virtue of a faithfulness to themselves. Since hesed also means 'grace' or 'love,' this occurs precisely on the basis of this fidelity. The fact that the commitment in question has not only a moral character but almost a juridical one makes no difference." Among those meanings, one of the Hebrew words for 'love' is hesed, which is a difficult word to accurately translate into English because of the wide range of meanings it encompasses. Theologian John Oswalt said hesed is "... a completely undeserved kindness and generosity" (retrieved 7 *Hebrew Words Every Christian Should Know*). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Though the mountains be shaken, and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love (hesed) for you will not be shaken" (Is 54:10). Hesed is not just a feeling, but is, in fact, an action. It "intervenes on behalf of loved ones and comes to their rescue", according to author Lois Tverberg (retrieved: *firmissrael.org*). Verses six and seven are the capstone of chapter thirty-four in the Book of Exodus (Ex 34:6-7) and in these two poignant verses, you will find the core of Old Testament theology of God's revelation

to Moses. In fact, those verses are programmatic for the rest of the Bible and they read, *Gracious... steadfast*: this succinct poetic description of God is an often-repeated statement of belief, for example in the Book of Psalms, "*Merciful and gracious* is the Lord, *slow to anger*, and *abounding in mercy*" (Ps 103:8). All those terms describe God's relationship to Israel, the covenant people.

## Hesed - Mercy and/or Love

As mentioned prior, the Old Testament has two Hebrew words for mercy: (1) Hesed which indicates an attitude of goodness and, so, when that attitude exists between two individuals hesed not only implies wishing one another well but entails mutual fidelity based upon an interior commitment. Hesed can also mean love or grace. When this word is used in relation to the first covenant, hesed exemplifies a gift or grace for Israel and because God irrevocably committed Himself to respect that gift, the word also acquired a legal connotation. Nonetheless, when Israel broke the covenant, while God's obligation to respect that relationship was abrogated, because the God of Israel did not do so, while the legal obligations connected with it ceased, in that situation hesed's deeper meaning was manifested — love that gives, divine love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin. (2) The second Hebrew word for mercy is *rahamim* that denotes a mother's love for the child in her womb. The mother-child bond creates a unique maternal-child relationship and becomes an exclusive or particular kind of love. As love for the child in the womb, that type of love, as spontaneous and unearned, *rahamim* encompasses a demand or a heart-felt requirement. Such womb-love, then, also implies a wide range of feelings, such as goodness, tenderness, patience, and understanding—in a word, womb-love embodies the readiness to forgive. In the New Testament, the English word mercy translates the Greek word *eleos* (Gk. ἔλεος) which is etymologically related to an older Greek word for olive oil (Gk. ἔλαιον). Oil of that type was used to soothe bruises and minor wounds. Massaging the oil into those injured areas was comforting and brought the injured bodily part back toward wholeness; thus, the link between hesed when understood as steadfast love and coupled with mercy as *eleos*, such a combination points toward God's loving kindness. Finally, the Latin word *misericordia* often has the connotation of condescension or pity; however, it really is meant to be a gut-wrenching reaction to another's plight that prompts immediate action to improve the sufferer's situation. A series of related words with profound theological meaning.