

## Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A, (Vineyard and Wicked Tenants)

Is 5:1-7; Phil 4:6-9; Matt 21:33-43

Most of us know how much work is involved in caring for a garden or farm. Just imagine how much work involved with setting up an entire vineyard, which is a full time business. Today we hear similarity between the First reading and the Gospel reading about the tending vineyard and yielding grapes.

The first reading from The Book of Isaiah talks about "*The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard*" while the Gospel of Matthew talks about "*The Parable of the Wicked Tenants.*"

Our first reading popularly known as the parable or song of the vineyard is a metaphor. In this reading, God recounts his love and care for Judah. He chose her as the apple of his eyes (Zach 2, 8). Since through the prophet Isaiah God had already described his chosen people, Israel, as a vineyard, but God declared how disappointed he is that instead of yielding sweet grapes they produce sour grapes (Is 5:4). Isaiah said to the people of Israel that they take work to have a good harvest just as takes good work to remain faithful to the Lord.

In the gospel of today like in the first reading, we find another metaphor of the vineyard. The image of vineyard was very familiar to the Jewish people in Jesus' day. In this parable, a landowner planted a beautiful vineyard and leased it to tenants to tend. When harvest time came, the landowner sent his servants for several times to obtain his produce, but they beat and killed them all. Lastly, he sent his son to them because he presumed that they will respect him, but they killed him too. It is because the people wanted not just their share of their harvest, but the whole thing.

This parable portrays God as a landowner who sent the prophets and messengers to us. The vineyard represents Israel; the planters or tenants represent the Jewish religious leaders and the elders of people; the servants represent the prophets of the Old Testament who suffered for preaching the Word of God by being killed violently. We hear Jesus clearly speaking to the religious leaders with this parable of the tenant farmers who refused to listen to the God 'servants, his prophets and messengers. These prophets were sent by God to remind them of the Lord's relationship of love with them, but they've continued to ignore or mistreat the message or the messenger. They rejected and killed them. They even killed His Son is Jesus in attempt to acquire his inheritance. That is why Jesus tells them, "*I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.*" Finally, Jesus also says: "*The stone the builders rejected become the cornerstone.*" By saying this, Jesus addressed the chief priests and the elders of the people.

This parable is also a warning to us Christians. Many Catholics are going to Mass on Sundays and are participating in Holy Mass. We are listening to the Word of God and we are receiving Holy Communion. Some of us here are participating in the choir, Eucharistic minister, usher, lector, commentator, religious education, ministry to the sick and a lot of unnamed activities in church. These are very good things when we attend Holy Mass and involve in church activities, but if we only remain here in this part and not doing any effort to grow in our faith, we are neglecting one of the purposes of the Eucharist, that is, to show our love for God in our daily live or to fight obvious injustices or to alleviate the miseries of our suffering brothers and sisters. Also, by loving those who hate us, by forgiving even those who wrongs against us.

And by doing so, we become like God who love without condition those who committed sins against Him. So to be true Christians mean a not to say: "*I have not done anything wrong,*" But what we do or can do.

The parable in the Gospel today reminds us Christians and for each one of us personally that in the Old Testament, God sent servants, his prophets, and then sent his Son, Jesus. God continues to send messages to us, to call us to produce fruit from the vineyard. Jesus declares that the kingdom of God "*will give to a people that will produce its fruit.*" The task of building up that kingdom was given to us at our baptism. We are called to take care of vineyard of our hearts.

We are called to take care of vineyard of our family, our community and our church.

*What are we doing to cultivate a vineyard where we are living and working?* God has put us in this vineyard to do his word on earth; we pray that God grants us the diligence and grace to work faithfully until the end. In order to do that, we must listen to and accept God's word, church's teachings, the hierarchy itself and the Pope to produce good fruits. So let us then work hard to make our faith produce real fruits of justice, peace, and love. Otherwise, the Lord might take away from us our vineyard.

Today is the first Sunday of October, the month of Mary or the month of prayer of the Rosary. In order to honor our beloved Mary of Rosary, We will be praying the Rosary at the statue of Our Lady in the parking lot of Saint Mary's church at Noon on Saturday, October 17. We are invited to join in praying to our beloved Mary. We ask our loving Mary to instruct us in the ways of knowing our place as cultivators, not owners of the vineyard. May her example inspire us to cultivate good fruit, not for ourselves, but for the great landowner - our Father in heaven!