

## **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**

How is our vineyard coming along? Our vineyard could be ourselves, our family, our work, or our parish. Actually, our vineyard belongs to God, not to us. We don't own it; we are only tenants.

Do you know that our vineyard was carefully prepared by somebody else? God cleared away rough stones and wild bushes, and tilled the soil for tender young vines to spread their soft roots. God did all these things with his own hands, without using any machine. God put a great effort into preparing the soil and planting the vines in our vineyard. God also made the sun rise and sent rain to ensure a rich and abundant harvest. For our part, we simply prune the vines and weed out wild grasses in order to let them produce abundant sweet grapes.

Today's readings are all about our vineyard. The first reading and the responsorial psalm show that the vineyard of the Lord is the house of God's people. The gospel reading is called the parable of the vineyard, how God's people are cared for.

In the gospel account, the owner was deeply concerned over his tenants' care of his vineyard, especially when the tenants produced wild and sour grapes. The owner sent his servants over and over again, but every one of them was beaten or stoned by the tenants. Finally, the owner sent his son, who was seized and lynched. In ancient Palestine, whoever owned land for some time could eventually gain possession. Obviously, in order to possess the land, the tenants killed the owner's son. At last, the owner came in person and replaced the old wicked tenants with new tenants. The vineyard was safeguarded under new management after all.

Actually, vineyard is an image of Israel as a bride. So this parable depicts the entire history of salvation using symbolic languages and metaphors. The religious leaders of Israel did not take good care of the vineyard of the Lord, so God sent many prophets. The leaders badly treated or killed them, one by one. But God was still deeply concerned with His vineyard, so God finally sent His Son. They killed him, too. God's care for His vineyard was so important and so serious that He sacrificed His own Son.

The point of the parable is that God always cares for His vineyard. Starting with the creation, through the incarnation and the death and resurrection of Jesus, and up to the future fulfillment of the eternal kingdom, God maintains a personal relationship with His vineyard—his people. The psalmist expresses God’s care during the creation in this way: “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Ps 8:3-5).

Jesus Christ has shown us the face of God and also shown us how to take care of God’s vineyard. We know that Jesus is consubstantial with the Father, as recited in the Creed. Regretfully, however, we forget that Jesus is consubstantial with us. (What is more, even after the death and resurrection, the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwells within us and is ready to help us whenever we want.) That is why in Jesus Christ we attain the salvation from God.

The entire history of salvation points out that God is deeply and seriously concerned with His vineyard—his people. Why? Why God is so deeply and seriously concerned about his people? The reason is that each one of us is precious and valuable to God, and all of us together can give glory and honor to God to the fullest.

In God’s vineyard, God wants us to enjoy the early morning sunrise; God wants us to walk with him in the evening breeze; God wants us to be glad with the riches of His harvest. What God asks us to do in return is to look after His vineyard faithfully and diligently. Thus we are to produce abundant, choice grapes from His vineyard so that excellent choice wines are made from them.

God’s vineyard is all that we are and all that we do, as honored and dignified people of God. God’s vineyard is our families, whom we love and care for. God’s vineyard is our works, where we honor and respect all people of God. God’s vineyard is our parish, where we belong to and serve each other.

How is our vineyard coming along? I mean, how is God’s vineyard coming along? Are we taking care of it diligently and faithfully? †

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