



27th Sunday Ord. Time Yr A

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Our text this Sunday is the second of three Parables in response to the religious Authorities' questioning of Jesus' authority for what he was doing and saying. It is the same context as last Sunday's Gospel. The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt 21:28-32) presented the general principle that doing God's will is the honourable way even if we hesitate. Are the Authorities honourably choosing God's will in refusing to believe in Jesus? This Sunday's parable, The Parable of the Tenants (Mt 21:33-43), directly refers to the history of Israel and its resistance to doing God's will. The Authorities drew their authority from their connection to Israel's history. Was this to be a time that the Authorities follow the will of God or reject it? Many times in their history, Prophets were rejected; and, the people, under the lead of the Authorities, were unfaithful to God. In this parable, as in last Sunday's parable, an honourable way to change their minds is within the Parable. Will they make the connections? The vineyard was an image of the People of Israel that the Authorities used and understood^{1,2}. At that time, Jesus was frustrated with the lack of 'fruit' that the Authorities were producing. He had expressed this frustration with the cursing of the unproductive fig tree (Mt 21:19-23). Doubt about Jesus' authority produces no 'fruit' but belief in Jesus (especially expressed in prayer) can 'move mountains' i.e. produce great 'fruit'. The Authorities did make the connections after hearing these two Parables (Mt 21:45-46). However, rather than prompting them to believe in Him, it strengthens the Authorities' resolve to get rid of Him (as Prophets had been 'got rid of' in their history) even though the people saw Jesus as a Prophet.

Read: **Matthew 21: 33 - 43**

Meditatio: How good am I at listening? Can I see beyond the story of parables? Who is the 'landowner' for me? How do I relate to God the Father? Do I appreciate the wonder of the world in which I live? How do I look after the environment? Do I protect the world for these times and for future generations? Am I making the world a better place by what I do? How do I react to being asked to give an account of my life? Do I see my life as a gift to be used to the glory of God and the coming of his kingdom? Have I received an inheritance? Have I been involved in disputes over a Will or an inheritance? What length would I go to in order to get an inheritance? Am I overly concerned in amassing my wealth and security? What do I think of those who are rich at the expense of (ripping off) others? Do I responsibly use the wealth and possessions I have? What is the keystone in my life? Is the building of God's kingdom pivotal in my life? Am I truly a sharer in the kingdom of God? What 'fruits' of the kingdom have I made possible?

Oratio: Pray for better skills in listening. Pray for faith to see how God the Father is at work in our world. Pray for a responsible use of the world's resources. Pray for a care of the environment. Pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Pray that Jesus will not be frustrated by what we do? Pray that we may change what we do so we reflect God's love in what we do. Pray for those who use force to get their way. Pray for auditors and those whose job it is to test performance. Pray for students preparing for exams. Pray for openness to 'servants of the Lord' e.g. the angels, prophets and priests. Pray that we will not repeat the mistakes of history. Pray that we will not just see what we must do without doing it. Pray that the building of God's kingdom (i.e. being missionary) may be a prime focus in our lives. Pray that Jesus will be the authority in our lives.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer — Support missionary efforts.

✍ Fr Joe

Matthew 21: 33 - 43

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people³, 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son" he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

*It was the stone rejected by the builders
that became the keystone.*

*This was the Lord's doing
and it is wonderful to see?*

I tell you, then, that the kingdom will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

Notes:

1 The first Reading for this Sunday (Isaiah 5:1-7) explains the understanding that the Authorities had of the image of the Vineyard.

2 Quoted just before the end of the Parable are the words: "It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see?" The Authorities would know these words well from Ps 118(119). This psalm focusses on God's actions for us and how these are not earned but come from God's free choice to help us. Putting it in the form of a question, is Jesus' way of inviting the Authorities to consider whether they are being faithful to the Psalms that they use in their prayer (processions) and know well.

3 The opening line of the Reading is not in the Bible text but is added for clarity to the liturgical Reading. In the Bible texts, Jesus starts speaking with the Authorities at Mt 21:23 when they challenge his authority.