



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8th October 2023 - The Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 8th October 2023 - True Justice (Matthew 21:33-43)

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, '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 of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

Jesus' understanding of the sovereignty of God brought him violent opposition from some of the Jewish leaders. Were they corrupt, or just closed to any new way of thinking, so closed that they could not see that Jesus was the promised Messiah? Anyway, Jesus used this story about the tenants of a vineyard to show that the religious authorities were not leading the people as they should. Everyone would immediately understand the image of the vineyard. The prophet Isaiah had used this image in a well-known poem eight centuries earlier to show that the vineyard of Israel refused to yield a good harvest to God, whatever care God lavished on it. God expected fairness of judgment from the people and all he found was a shriek of agony (the same word is used in Hebrew for 'fair-judgment' and for 'shriek' apart from one letter). What does this mean for us? Not that we have to follow every new idea. But it does mean that we must be open to the idea that we may be wrong, that our service of the Lord may be faulty, that people we find tiresome or unacceptable may have more good in them than we credited. God's ways are not our ways. Life may not be mapped out how we think, so we need to watch out for the bend in the road.

What is God asking of you?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 8th October 2023



First Reading: *The Song of the Vineyard*

Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing to my friend the song of his love for his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted choice vines in it. In the middle he built a tower; he dug a press there too. He expected it to yield grapes, but sour grapes were all that it gave. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, I ask you to judge between my vineyard and me. What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done? I expected it to yield grapes. Why did it yield sour grapes instead? Very well, I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on, and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on. I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug; overgrown by the briar and the thorn. I will command the clouds to rain no rain on it. Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the House of Israel, and the men of Judah that chosen plant. He expected justice, but found bloodshed; integrity, but only a cry of distress.

A vineyard needs a lot of devoted care, pruning, manuring and tying back. In the rocky soil of Israel even more special care is needed, such as gathering the stones to form retaining walls to keep the soil from eroding, building a lookout tower against thieves and a vine-press for crushing the grapes. Then the right fruiting-vine has to be grafted onto the sturdy stock, as here the vinedresser grafts on fine grapes. Imagine his disappointment when all he gets for his pains is inedible wild grapes! After this haunting parable of Isaiah, the vineyard became a stock image of Israel, swathed in God's loving care, and all the dwellers in the rich vines of the hill-country of Israel would be aware that it was an image of the love lavished on his people. So when Israel goes into Exile, Psalm 80 laments, 'You brought a vine out of Egypt. Why have you broken down its fences? Every passer-by plucks its grapes. Wild beasts feed on it.' The prophets also, especially Ezekiel, used the image of the vineyard. Jesus' hearers would immediately recognise what he meant when he told his parable about a vineyard.

Why was the image of the vineyard so powerful for the people of Israel?

Second Reading: *Advice for the Community*

Philippians 4:6-9

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.

This warm and affectionate little passage was probably originally the end of a letter from Paul to the community at Philippi, which he loved so well. It is a lovely conclusion to a letter. Paul encourages them in every way to be cheerful in the Lord, but especially to be grateful. If we really appreciate that the Lord is near, we cannot worry and the peace of God will rest upon us. Then also gratitude and thanksgiving will be our mode of thought, penetrating all our thoughts on every subject. The Greek word Paul uses for 'thanksgiving' is 'Eucharist', which is the name we use in the Church for the great prayer of thanksgiving, offered by Christ to the Father in the name of us all. It is the summing up of all prayer, petition, gratitude and admiration. No doubt Paul is thinking of it as the high point of all prayer.

How does St Paul encourage us to live and grow together as the Church community?

“Be cheerful in the Lord.”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

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