



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

USCCB » Bible » Daily Readings

OCTOBER 8, 2017

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 139

Reading 1

IS 5:1-7

Let me now sing of my friend,
my friend's song concerning his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside;
he spaded it, cleared it of stones,
and planted the choicest vines;
within it he built a watchtower,
and hewed out a wine press.
Then he looked for the crop of grapes,
but what it yielded was wild grapes.

Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard:
What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I had not done?
Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes,
did it bring forth wild grapes?
Now, I will let you know
what I mean to do with my vineyard:
take away its hedge, give it to grazing,
break through its wall, let it be trampled!
Yes, I will make it a ruin:
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
but overgrown with thorns and briars;
I will command the clouds
not to send rain upon it.
The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah are his cherished plant;
he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed!
for justice, but hark, the outcry!

Responsorial Psalm**PS 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20**

R. (Is 5:7a) The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.
 A vine from Egypt you transplanted;
 you drove away the nations and planted it.
 It put forth its foliage to the Sea,
 its shoots as far as the River.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.
 Why have you broken down its walls,
 so that every passer-by plucks its fruit,
 The boar from the forest lays it waste,
 and the beasts of the field feed upon it?

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.
 Once again, O LORD of hosts,
 look down from heaven, and see;
 take care of this vine,
 and protect what your right hand has planted
 the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.
 Then we will no more withdraw from you;
 give us new life, and we will call upon your name.
 O LORD, God of hosts, restore us;
 if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.
 R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Reading 2**PHIL 4:6-9**

Brothers and sisters:
 Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
 by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
 make your requests known to God.
 Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding
 will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters,
 whatever is true, whatever is honorable,
 whatever is just, whatever is pure,
 whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
 if there is any excellence
 and if there is anything worthy of praise,
 think about these things.
 Keep on doing what you have learned and received
 and heard and seen in me.
 Then the God of peace will be with you.

Alleluia**CF. JN 15:16**

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I have chosen you from the world, says the Lord,
to go and bear fruit that will remain.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

MT 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:

"Hear another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower.
Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

When vintage time drew near,
he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.

But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat,
another they killed, and a third they stoned.

Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones,
but they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking,
'They will respect my son.'

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another,
'This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'

They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him,

"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death
and lease his vineyard to other tenants
who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

by the Lord has this been done,

and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you,

the kingdom of God will be taken away from you
and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

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TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

Opening prayer: *Lord Jesus, we gather in your name to share our lives and your Word. We thank you for this opportunity. Breathe your Spirit upon us so that we may know the message you have for each of us today. Amen.*

Sharing life: What are you the most and least grateful for this week?

Facilitator reads focus question: The first and third readings present an image of Israel as a vineyard where God the Divine Planter and Cultivator has sowed his seed, but unfortunately has failed miserably to produce a good harvest. In the second reading, Paul exhorts the Philippians to be prayerful and constantly seek to do what is honorable, good and true.

If you have not read the commentary prior to the meeting, consider reading it either before of after you read each reading.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 5:1-7

Historical context: Isaiah is prophesying in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. Israel is God's vineyard, which he transplanted from Egypt into the land of Canaan and carefully cared for and cultivated. There was nothing that he did not do for his vineyard. *"What more could I have done . . ."* Isaiah's listeners were compelled to admit that absolutely nothing had been wanting in God's dealings with them. The Planter and Cultivator of the vineyard naturally expected the vineyard to produce good fruit. But, all that it produced was "sour grapes" -- bloodshed, oppression and infidelity.

God sowed choice grapes, but reaped stinking, rotted fruit.

God sowed peace, but got violence from his people.

God looked for true worship and got idolatry.

God sowed seeds of justice, but injustice grew up.

The message was clear. Yahweh had given all; Israel had yielded nothing. As a result, the owner is going to withdraw his protecting hand and Israel will be transplanted into exile and subjected to a drought and given the opportunity to repent and make a new choice for God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 80

The theme of the vineyard is continued in this psalm. The psalmist petitions God to watch out for his vineyard.

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:6-9

This second reading is a portion of Paul's advice to the Philippians concerning their life together. Anxiety and worry accomplishes nothing except the frittering away of energy and hope. Paul urges his readers to give their worries to God and to place their trust in him. This trust will lead them to experience a peace that passes understanding. Then Paul urges them to pursue a number of stoic virtues, which they can learn from observing and imitating him.

GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-43

This is a story about a good and patient landlord and wicked tenants, a story about God's dealings with his people. The landowner is God. The vineyard is Israel. The wicked tenants are the people of Israel, but more especially, the religious leaders who were given charge of the vineyard by God. The servants are the prophets sent by God and so often rejected and killed. Despite Israel's rejection of his representative, God never gave up on Israel. He continued to reach out to her, even sending her his only Son. But, she even rejected God's Son.

As in last week's Gospel, this parable was intended as a warning to the religious leaders. Once again they are offered a choice to accept or reject God's servant in their midst. Rejection will have dire consequences. But the warning went unheeded. The tenants came to a bad end, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Gentiles took the chosen people's place at God's table.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse, idea or image in the readings spoke to you most? Why?
2. In what way is your life bearing good fruit? Name one good fruit or spiritual value that you would like to grow in your life.
3. Paul tells us to "have no anxiety". Easier said than done. Do you tend to be an anxious person? What causes you to be anxious? What helps you to deal with anxiety?
4. Paul also tells us that our thoughts should be directed toward all that is good. What helps you to "remain positive" about life?
5. The gospel is a constant call to conversion. What causes you to resist God's call to change and grow? And what helps you to say 'yes'?

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Name one way you can act on this Sunday's readings. Suggestion: This week, when you feel anxious, pray, "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in thee." Bear good fruit in the Lord's Vineyard.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Pray for all who are workers in our church family -- Pope, bishops, priests and religious, the laity. Pray that the Lord send more workers into his vineyard. ©

REFLECTION

MT 21:33-43

[HTTP://OCARM.ORG/EN/CONTENT/LECTIO/LECTIO-DIVINA-MATTHEW-2133-4345-46](http://ocarm.org/en/content/lectio/lectio-divina-matthew-2133-4345-46)

- The text of today's Gospel forms part of a whole which is more vast or extensive which includes Mathew 21, 23-40. The chief priests and the Elders had asked Jesus with which authority he did those things (Mt 21, 23). They considered themselves the patrons of everything and they did not want anybody to do things without their permission. The answer of Jesus is divided into three parts: 1) He, in turn, asks them a question because he wants to know from them if John the Baptist was from heaven or from earth (Mt 21, 24-27). 2) He then tells them the parable of the two sons (Mt 21, 28-32). 3) He tells them the parable of the vineyard (Mt 21, 33-46) which is today's Gospel.

- Mathew 21, 33-40: The parable of the vineyard. Jesus begins as follows: "Listen to another parable: There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard, he fenced it around, dug a winepress in it and built a tower". The parable is a beautiful summary of the history of Israel, taken from the prophet Isaiah (Is 5, 1-7). Jesus addresses himself to the chief priests, to the elders (Mt 21, 23) and to the Pharisees (Mt 21, 45) and He gives a response to the question which they addressed to him asking about the origin of his authority (Mt 21, 23). Through this parable, Jesus clarifies several things: (a) He reveals the origin of his authority: He is the Son, the heir. (b) He denounces the abuse of the authority of the tenants, that is of the priests and elders who were not concerned and did not take care of the people of God. (c) He defends the authority of the prophets, sent by God, but who were killed by the priests and the elders. (4) He unmasks the authority by which they manipulate the religion and kill the Son, because they do not want to lose the source of income which they succeed to accumulate for themselves, throughout the centuries.

- Mathew 21, 41: The sentence which they give to themselves. At the end of the parable Jesus asks: "Now, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? They are not aware that the parable was speaking precisely of them. This is why, with the response that they give, they decree their own condemnation: "The chief priests and the elders of the people answered: 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him at the proper time". Several times Jesus uses this same method. He leads the person to say the truth about himself, without being aware that he condemns himself. For example in the case of the Pharisee who condemns the young woman considering her a sinner (Luke 7, 42-43) and in the case of the parable of the two sons (Mt 21, 28-32).

- Mathew 21, 42-46: The sentence given by themselves was confirmed by their behaviour. From the clarification given by Jesus, the chief priests, the elders and the Pharisees understand that the parable speaks about them, but they do not convert. All the contrary! They keep to their own project to kill Jesus. They will reject "the corner stone".

But they do not have the courage to do it openly, because they fear the reaction of the people.

- The diverse groups which held the power at the time of Jesus. In today's Gospel two groups appear which, at that time, governed: the priests, the elders and the Pharisees. Then, some brief information on the power which each of these groups and others had is given:

- a) The priests: They were the ones in charge of the worship in the Temple. The people took to the Temple the tithe and the other taxes and offerings to pay the promises made. The High Priest occupied a very important place in the life of the nation, especially after the exile. He was chosen and appointed from among the three or four aristocratic families who possessed more power and riches.
- b) The elders or the Chief Priests of the People: They were the local leaders in the different villages of the city. Their origin came from the heads of the ancient tribes.
- c) The Sadducees: they were the lay aristocratic elite of society. Many of them were rich merchants or landlords. From the religious point of view they were conservative. They did not accept the changes supported by the Pharisees, for example, faith in the resurrection and the existence of the angels.
- d) The Pharisees: Pharisee means: separated. They struggled in a way that through the perfect observance of the Law of purity, people would succeed in being pure, separated and saint as the Law and Tradition demanded! Because of the exemplary witness of their life according to the norms of the time, their moral authority was greatly extended in the villages of Galilee.
- e) Scribe or doctor of the Law: They were the ones in charge of teaching. They dedicated their life to the study of the Law of God and taught people what to do to observe all the Law of God. Not all the Scribes belonged to the same line. Some were united with the Pharisees, others with the Sadducees.