

Commentary on the Readings for Sunday, October 7, 2023

The 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The **Responsorial Psalm** gives us the theme of all the readings for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time. In the **First Reading** and the **Gospel** keep in mind that both writers are not talking about agricultural vineyards, rather, the "vineyard" is a metaphor for the house of Israel or, Judaism and the Jewish people of that time (7th or 6th century BC). In both readings it is God the Father who is the landowner and the Jewish people are the "tenants" who didn't take care of the vineyard that God had planted but they neglected it and permitted wild grapes (foreigners) to move into the land. This is a reflection of the time of the Jewish Monarchy (10th to the 6th century BC), and also the time of Christ. However, don't be misled. This could very well be a reflection of our time, when we neglect what the Church is teaching us today. Let us see how this is illustrated in the readings.

In the **First Reading**, from the **Prophet Isaiah (5:1-7)**, the Prophet is telling a story or a parable using the vineyard as a metaphor for Judah and the Jewish people who, during that time period, were falling further away from God and neglecting the faith and structure that Moses had established. Here also, God, through the prophet, is warning the people that this response to His love will only result in the vineyard being destroyed in the near future, and it was; but a small remnant always seemed to keep it alive only to be destroyed again for the same reasons.

The **Responsorial Psalm (80:9-20)** is a poem about the history of Judaism beginning with the time spent in Egypt where the Israelite People came together as a nation. God brought these enslaved people out under the leadership of Moses who gave them structure and a sense of Hope, but the people did not do their part to nourish this "plant or vine." The people begged God for help and He gave it generously, over and over, but they abused or neglected His love.

The **Second Reading** is from **St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (4:6-9)**. In connection with the other readings for this Sunday, this passage is telling us that God is not asking us to do great or unusual things for His Church, but each one of us should do his or her part according to the gifts given him or her, and that we should take care to nourish these gifts. As a result, the peace of God will come forth.

The **Gospel Reading** is from **Matthew (21:33-43)**. In this passage, we have a similar story about the vineyard. We should see the first "servants" as the early prophets (such as Elijah or Elisha) and the second group of servants as the later prophets (such as Isaiah and Ezekiel) who were sent to teach and exhort the Jewish people. Of course, the "son" who is killed by his own people is Christ, Himself. With this knowledge, the story should be more understandable. The point to be made here is: Are we, today, observing the teachings of Jesus Christ and His church the way we should, or are we just going through the motions and not bearing the fruit that is expected of each one of us? Something to think about during your prayer time this week! **MFB**