

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY-CYCLE A

We have pretty awesome readings for the Mass today. Whenever I hear about vineyards I think of a nice Riesling from Germany or a nice Muscato from Italy. Nothing like a nice glass of wine with a good book or conversation with good friends. But, there is something much more reflective we need to examine than our favorite type of wine.

In the reading from Isaiah, the owner of the vineyard did everything right but everything went wrong. He did everything he could to ensure choice grapes, but the vines produced only bitter and sour grapes; good for nothing but to be thrown out.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Isaiah is making it clear that the vineyard represents the people of God who are not producing what God expects and that which is due to Him.

Jesus deliberately builds on Isaiah's parable. Obviously Jesus is trying to get His fellow Jews to understand that unless they produce and believe in Him; bearing the choice wine that God desires, then the vineyard will be given to other tenants; other disciples. How could anyone not see Jesus Himself in the parable; the only son of the vineyard owner, being beaten and finally killed by those for whom He came?

It's important for us today to recognize that the target of the parable was not only the disciples of Jesus and His fellow Jews. This parable is just as much about us as it is them.

Sometimes we like to tell ourselves that God really doesn't expect too much from us. Or, we may not even think about what we owe to God at all. He has nurtured us through the Scriptures and through His Church. He has given us His only Son as our Savior. He has gifted us with unique gifts and talents. In so many words, He has worked long and hard on us.

Like the owner of the vineyard, God planted choice vines to bear choice grapes. But someone has substituted inferior vines; bearing bitter grapes.

We live in a world where life is cheap. Life, so precious, is now often seen as a nuisance when it suits our purposes. Deep within our hearts we know that life is God's gift to us, the most precious gift He has entrusted to us. We know right from wrong. We know the way of Christ Jesus. We know the grapes; the wine, He desires us to produce. Why then, are we so stubborn? Why do we refuse Him the harvest that He desires?

If we are to provide God with the choice grapes He seeks from us, we perhaps need to make a few changes in our vineyards. We need to fill our minds and hearts with things of God; not of this world!

On this Respect Life Weekend, what do we find growing in our vineyards? If Christ Jesus is not growing in my vineyard, what is?