

27th Sunday (A)

- The vineyard in today's Gospel is a beautiful image of the world God has entrusted to us — but it becomes increasingly uncomfortable the longer we listen.
- Jesus speaks of a vineyard planted with care, protected & prepared for fruitfulness, yet those entrusted with it gradually begin to behave as though it belongs to them.
- Perhaps that is one of the great spiritual questions of our time:
- What happens when those entrusted with God's vineyard forget that it is not theirs?
- We live in a remarkable moment in human history. We possess extraordinary technological power, including artificial intelligence capable of transforming how we work, communicate, make decisions & even wage war. Yet alongside such extraordinary achievement, we see wars, displacement, environmental destruction, inequality & an extraordinary amount of anger.
- There is something deeply biblical about that contradiction.
- We have been given an extraordinary vineyard — & we are struggling to live as faithful tenants.
- The first reading conveys the same message in another way: God seeks justice & integrity but finds oppression.
- God looks for good fruit but finds otherwise, & the Gospel reminds us that the vineyard is more than the planet.
- The vineyard is human community itself.
- It is the earth beneath our feet; it is the society we build together; it is the vulnerable person arriving at our border; it is the child growing up amid our decisions; it is the stranger whose suffering we would rather not see; it is even the person with whom we profoundly disagree.
- Perhaps that is why the Gospel is particularly challenging in an age of anger.
- We seem increasingly tempted to divide the vineyard into ours & theirs.
- We can become convinced that we alone possess the truth, while those who disagree are foolish, dangerous or somehow less deserving of consideration.
- But Jesus reminds us that the vineyard belongs to God.
- None of us owns the truth.
- None of us owns another human being & none of us owns the future.
- The resources of creation are gifts before they are possessions.
- That has enormous implications for the way we think about migrants & refugees.
- Behind the millions of displaced people in our world is not simply a statistic but a human being: a person, a family, a frightened child.
- Christian faith refuses to reduce people to categories; not simply "migrants", or "refugees" or simply "foreigners", but people in whom God has planted the divine image.

- And then there is the earth itself - we have taken enormously from the vineyard - minerals, forests, oceans, energy, land & water - often without asking whether the vineyard can continue to flourish.
- The question is not simply whether we are allowed to use creation; the question is whether we are cultivating or consuming it; whether our lives leave greater possibilities for those who come after us, or simply a larger harvest for ourselves.
- Yet I don't think Jesus tells this parable to leave us despairing.
- The extraordinary heart of the Gospel is what happens when the tenants reject the owner's son - the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone.
- Christianity begins precisely there: God brings life out of rejection, hope out of failure, resurrection out of crucifixion, & that's extraordinary good news for us.
- Because God does not abandon the vineyard; & God doesn't abandon us.
- The first reading makes us conscious of what has gone wrong; the Gospel reminds us that God's response to human failure is not to give up on humanity, but to enter more deeply into our human story.
- God keeps investing in us; God keeps trusting us; God keeps calling us to become something more than we presently are.
- So perhaps the question we should ask is not simply: "What is wrong with the world?" but: "What fruit can God still bring forth through me?"
- Paul gives us a beautiful answer in today's second reading: whatever is true, noble, just, pure, gracious, excellent & worthy of praise.
- Perhaps that is where our discipleship begins in this anxious age.
- When there is anger, we can cultivate patience; when there is hatred, we can cultivate human dignity; when there is fear of the stranger, we can cultivate welcome.
- When technology threatens to diminish the human person, we can insist upon conscience, compassion & responsibility.
- When the earth is exploited, we can become people who protect rather than merely consume; when the world is fractured by war, we can refuse to surrender our belief in peace.
- None of us can repair the whole vineyard, but each of us has been given a patch of it – in our family; our workplace; our neighbourhood; our parish; our friendships; in the little corner of God's creation where I am.
- And perhaps that's the hope of today's Gospel: God entrusted the vineyard to us because God believes that something good can grow through us.
- So this week, perhaps ask not simply, "What am I doing wrong?" Ask something more hopeful: "What has God planted in me — & what good fruit might God still be able to grow through my life?"
- Because the vineyard is still God's.
- The story is not finished. And neither are we.