

Twenty-Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time
Oct 5, 2008

With all this talk of vineyards, it sort of makes you want to go out for a glass of wine or something! Yes, it is the third week in a row that the Gospel message is about vineyards. Two weeks ago, we heard that God invites us to the vineyard, sometimes early in our lives and some times later. It isn't a matter of when God invites us, but it matters that we eventually turn to God and come. Last week, we realized that even though it may take us a little while to say "yes," we need to show up to do God's work in the vineyard. Today, we hear that if we don't show up, there are consequences!

Why did Matthew write about this vineyard parable of Jesus? He wanted to tell the Pharisees, the leaders of the Jewish faith, that because they rejected Jesus, God would give the vineyard to others.

We are the others to whom God has given the vineyard. God has done everything in his power to provide for us and to enable us to thrive and grow. He selected an ideal site, cleared the ground of all obstacles, planted the best vines, and even dug a winepress, because he was confident that we will work with Him to produce good fruit.

What does that vineyard look like in our lives? We don't have grapes to pick, but we do have our family, our church, our neighborhood and our world. Remember, God created our vineyard and placed us in it. Our vineyards may be our places of work, where we are respected and given the opportunity to thrive and grow. Our vineyards may be with our families,

where we are called to invest our energy. Our vineyards might be the particular ministry in which we serve the Church, where we are called to give our resources and talents. Wherever we find ourselves, we are to do God's work and bear good fruit. The Gospel is clear. If we do not accept this gift from God and work in the vineyard, it will be taken away from us and be given to a people that will produce fruit.

The Pharisees didn't get it. I would venture to say that oftentimes we don't get it either. Just think about this past week. Are there people out there who are misguided in their leadership? Have they ignored the trust of the people and in their greed lent money to people who do not have the financial security to repay it? Are there others, who in their need to keep up with the Joneses have borrowed money beyond reason? Are there people who live in credit card debt because of their insatiable desire for more? Have we ignored the prophets? I think we have. Regardless of the solution, I think we can all agree that we have big problems with the economy.

We are all asking, "How could this happen?" Could it be that we have forgotten to place our trust in God? Could it be that we don't believe that what God has provided for us is enough? In our greed, do we look to make a profit without doing the work required? Or are we living with the illusion that we will get something for nothing? Do we have a distorted view of what God requires of us as workers in the vineyard?

I don't know about you, but I am weary of systems, governments, and institutions that seem to be crumbling before my eyes. I am weary of feeling

powerless in the wake of insurmountable, complex odds, which threaten my sense of security. I ask myself, “Where is God calling us in such chaos?”

I believe that God is calling us to work in the vineyard. We are called to be the good stewards in life. If you are honest in your dealings with others and I am honest in my dealings with others, we are telling the world that there is a better way. If we are content to live simply, we show others what a grace it is to live dependant on God. If we live our lives in gratitude for our abundance rather than always reaching for more, then we are telling the world that there is more than enough for all of us. If we invest our energy for the good of others, each of us in the vineyard where we are planted, then we are telling the world that together, we are living I,n the Kingdom... It isn't something out there to be reached; it is a reality here today!

In 30 days we will be called to vote for the leadership of our nation. It is our responsibility to be informed and to vote our conscience. But our responsibility doesn't end with pushing the button in the voting booth. We are called to invest our energy today in the vineyard of our lives. The vineyard of our world needs all of us.

What will we do today to create a clean environment? What unselfish action will we take today to build up our world rather than take from it? What will we do today to share with those in need? There are many needs in the vineyard which require our gifts and talents. God trusts us to do our part. Remember in the vineyard, God dug a wine press for grapes. God expects us to work with him in the vineyard. What fruit will we bring to the harvest?