

SUNDAY 27 (A) (2020)

A) INTRODUCTION

- on holiday in France, or Spain or Italy, you will have noticed how the vineyard is a very familiar feature of the landscape
- apparently, looking after a vineyard is highly labour intensive
- It requires an extraordinary amount of care, ensuring that the soil is right, the plant is carefully pruned, the fruit is protected as it grows, and the harvest is gathered in at the right time.
- not surprising that the image of the vineyard should be used in the Old and New Testament, as a symbol of God's love and care for his people.

B) FIRST READING

- First Reading, the prophet Isaiah, (C.8 BC), uses the vineyard as an image of the people of Israel, God's chosen people.
- There on a fertile hillside, the Lord "dug the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted choice vines in it. In the middle he built a tower, he dug a wine-press too."
- so, in his generosity, He did everything to enable the vine, his people, to yield good fruit, "but sour grapes were all that it gave."
- Through the prophet, God then challenges his people: "What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?"
- God had chosen them as his own people, had brought them out of slavery, transplanted them to a fertile land and protected them from their enemies; and they had turned their backs on him.

C) GOSPEL

- In the Gospel, Jesus takes up the symbol of the vineyard and develops it further.
- He reminds his listeners of other benefits God has done for his people: he has sent them his servants, that is, the prophets;
- They were to call his people back to a right relationship with God;
- but the tenants, the religious leaders of the people, had seized them, thrashed them, stoned them, killed them.
- Finally, as the greatest possible sign of his love for them, the Lord had sent his own son. "They will respect my Son," he said.
- But they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard (beyond the walls of Jerusalem) and put him to death.
- In this Jesus was, of course, foretelling his own fate. He too would be taken outside the city walls of Jerusalem and crucified.

D) CONSEQUENCES

- In response to the ingratitude of the Chosen People of the Old Testament, Isaiah had spoken of the destruction of the vineyard.
- The people would suffer defeat at the hands of their enemies and would be taken off into exile.
- Jesus tells the scribes and the Pharisees: the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a people who will produce its fruit.
- The old Israel would be replaced by the new, the Jewish people by the new community of the followers of Christ.

E) AND FOR US?

- the religious leaders in Jesus' time were complacent
- and Jesus was trying to shake them out of their complacency
- and we too run the risk of becoming complacent
- The new tenants, the leaders of the Church today, have just as great a responsibility to look after the Lord's vineyard and help it to bear fruit. (cf. Papal Nuncio, Bishop, priests, Deacons)
- But the same is true of everyone of us, of every individual member of the Church.
- Each of us, through our baptism, is part of the Lord's vineyard, called to bear fruit.
- That fruitfulness begins when we accept and believe in Christ, when we model ourselves on his life and his values,
- and when we allow his love and his power to guide and inform everything that we say and do.
- Later on, Jesus was to use the image of the vine to describe that intimate unity between himself and his followers.
- I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me, you can do nothing.

F) SECOND READING

- Second Reading, from St. Paul, is a wonderful invitation to turn frequently to God, full of confidence and trust in him, full of gratitude for all that he has given us and called us to be.
- It is an invitation too to commit ourselves to bear fruit in plenty.
- "Finally," says St. Paul, "fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous and worthy of praise...
- Then the God of peace will be with you."

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