

Homily for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel is addressed to the "chief priests and the elders of the people". Of course this was the same body of people, who would reject Jesus as the Messiah and call for Him to be crucified before Herod. And so, it was to them that Jesus addresses this not-so-veiled teaching. Now, just to make sure everybody's on the same page, the landowner is the God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The vineyard is the Jewish people, whom God delivered from slavery in Egypt – as the responsorial psalm puts it today, "A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it." Then, at harvest time, God first sends His servants, that is, the Old Testament prophets. And in history, we know that they indeed killed Isaiah, stoned Jeremiah, pursued Elijah, and beheaded John the Baptist. And clearly the son, sent by God, is none other than the very Son of God, who came by the will of the Father to His vineyard, the Jewish people. It was Him the people would seize and crucify outside the city of Jerusalem. Now, in the parable, the tenants thought they would get a monetary inheritance by rejecting and killing the son. But in reality, Jesus was revealing that the kingdom of God would be taken away from those who rejected Him. But to those who would accept Him and believe in Him, His Father would work all things for good by bringing about their eternal salvation through His very death and resurrection on the cross.

Now, we might think to ourselves, “Why would the landowner send his son, knowing how the tenants of the vineyard treated the servants? Didn’t he know they would do the same or worse to him?” Similarly, perhaps we wonder about God, “Why did the Father send His only-begotten Son to us, knowing how our ancestors in the faith had treated the prophets and other people of God? Why did He abandon His Son to our world? And where was the Father when Jesus was dying on the cross?” Where was the Father? Right there with His Son at the cross. Not somewhere out in a far-distant heaven watching what was going on; but right there! He was right there in the hearts of the Blessed Mother, and of Mary Magdalene, and of John, the beloved disciple, right there below at the foot of Christ’s cross, comforting Him.

Also, perhaps we’ve asked ourselves recently, “Where was God in Las Vegas? Why did 59 people have to die, and some 489 people get injured?” Where was God in Las Vegas? Well, as the very Feast of the Guardian Angels was dawning (celebrated every year on October 2nd), God was there in the hearts of so many first responders, and members of the military and others, who covered people from the shooter, some of whom even ran towards the bullets to help people.

My friends, we have to realize that God has given us free will. It's that same free will that was misused to crucify the very Son of God. And it was that same free will that was abused to shoot and kill all those innocent people. At the same time, though, that free will was also used to stand with Jesus and comfort Him at the foot of the cross; and that same free will emboldened some to put others first at the risk of their own earthly lives.

You know, God dwell within us. And the choices we make give evidence to the world that He truly exists. As believers, we are His hands, His feet, His heart – His very Body, which is the Church! If we want the world to know where God is in the midst of tragedy, whether personal or national, then let's show them – show them!

Now, Jesus wasn't *just* born to shed His blood and die for us. He could have really done that before growing into adulthood, when Herod was persecuting the Holy Innocents, and had all the male children in Bethlehem two years of age and under slaughtered. However, Jesus wanted to show us by His very life – His words, His gestures, and His example – the love of His Father. He wanted us to see and experience first-hand through Him God's perfect love for those He came to save.

Similarly, we have to realize that our faith is not just about us getting into heaven at the end of our lives, and not just about coming to Mass every Sunday and participating in the sacraments. It's also about how we live every moment of our lives – the big moments *and* the small moments; the moments covered by national news *and* those that no one else will ever know about. I'm becoming more and more convinced that it's by how we as Christians live, more than any other method, that we reveal to the world the love of God the Father.

In 1975, Blessed Pope Paul VI stated, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Really living as Christians, and loving and serving God by loving and serving others, is so important. In a special way I'd like to make a concluding remark about *Discovering Christ*, which we just finished here at the parish this past week. For the 150 people who signed up for *Discovering Christ*, we have come to learn and experience ever deeper that it's all about each of us making Jesus the Lord of every part of our lives. For, it is when we are personally rooted in Him in such a profound way, that His Holy Spirit lives and moves within us in powerful ways, so that we can lovingly and courageously give witness to the love and mercy of God our Father. God bless you.