Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Be Good Workers in the Lord's Vineyard
October 4, 2026

In this Sunday Gospel (Matthew 21:33-43), which is connected to the First reading (Isaiah 5: 1-7) we have another vineyard parable, the story of the evil tenant farmers who tried to steal the vineyard from their Master, even putting his messengers to death and finally killing his son. So why all these vineyards? The vineyard was a fixture in Jesus 'time. Everybody drank wine. Wine can't be produced unless there are grapes. Therefore, there were many vineyards in the ancient world that had to be worked at and Jesus' audience could relate well.

Who are these wicked labourers? On one level they are the leaders of the Jewish people of Jesus 'day. They were entrusted with the Vineyard of the Lord. They were called upon to provide fruit for the Lord, given the mission to nourish the people in the Word of God and prepare them for the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. But they used the people for their own selfish gain. They taxed the people exceedingly for their own financial support. The people were also their means of power before the Romans. They would use the sheer number of the people as a threat to the Pax Romana. They did not prepare the people for the Messiah. In fact, they didn't even want a Messiah. What if the Messiah would eliminate the need for the Temple? What if the Messiah were to tell the people that God was not looking for them to revolt against Rome, but was looking for them to build a spiritual kingdom? What would the Temple priests and Levites do? No, they didn't want a Messiah. He would disrupt their system of using God's people to enrich themselves. "So," the Lord says, "the vineyard will be taken from those evil farmers and given to others who would nurture it and bear the fruit of the Kingdom." That is one level of truth that this parable conveys. I suppose it has its merit in understanding salvation history. But does this parable really have a message for us 2026 years after the birth of the Word Made Flesh? You bet!

God has prepared all of us, not just the baptized, to lead good and holy lives. God has equipped us for being good stewards for His vineyard - our body, our soul, our environment, our inside and outside world, we own nothing, everything given to us belong to God. Each of us is a tenant, cultivating a small portion of God's vineyard. At harvest time, we are expected to produce the fruits of right living, by displaying a brotherhood of caring, sharing and showing forth the charity of the gospel in our daily lives. We are given the big responsibility of providing fruit for our Master. Yet how often our selfishness renders that loving preparation fruitless. Sadly, some people use the vineyard for themselves and not for God. Very often we the tenants fell into greed and a "possessive attitude," we view ourselves as the ultimate owners rather than mere stewards of God's creation. So, we are creating a society that emphasize individual rights. We have people saying "My body, my choice" or "I know my rights and you are not to tell me what's right and what's wrong." We have to be careful not to abuse our given authority, especially spiritual leadership within the Church. Some people, even clergy, face the constant temptation to work for their own power and interests instead of serving God and others. The absolute worst example of this, the most horrific period of our modern Church's life, was the sex scandal by some clergy. There was also the residential school's problem. There are other people who use God's vineyard for their own personal gain and not to produce fruit for God's harvest. There are people who come to Church for the sole reason of getting a girl or guy to go out with them. Some use their own attendance or volunteer work at Church as an opportunity for their career advancement or job opportunities. True authority according to Pope Francis is an act of service, not exploitation. The vineyard is the Lord's, not ours. And as such should be exercised for the good of all and for the dissemination of the Gospel.

We have been entrusted with the vineyard of the Lord to produce fruit for our God. Grapes, bundles of grapes, bundles of love, must be nurtured by our kindness to be transformed by the Lord not just into wine, but into the very Blood of Christ. For we, the tenant farmers, have been entrusted to do no less than to fill the world with the Presence of Christ. There will be a day of reckoning for all of us. A time will come when we will be answerable for the way in which we have carried out the task God has given us to do. What if at the end of life, we have nothing to offer the Lord but the sour grapes of a pagan lifestyle? We will have smothered a beautiful being with indifference, ingratitude, selfishness and neglect and have become useless to God. Despite this kind of attitude, God continues to offer mercy, circulating the "new wine" of his Kingdom through unexpected and humble means until we respond to Christ's appeal to bear fruit and become an immense and beautiful harvest.

Saint Paul, in the second reading (Philippians 4: 6-9), tells us how to be good workers in the Lord's vineyard: that which is true, noble, just, pure, lovely and honoured; that which is virtuous and praiseworthy, let all this be the daily object of our commitment. It is the attitude of authority and also of each one of us, because every one of us, even in a small, tiny way, has a certain authority. In this way we shall become a Church ever richer in the fruits of holiness; we shall give glory to the Father who loves us with infinite tenderness, to the Son who continues to give us salvation, and to the Spirit who opens our hearts and impels us towards the fullness of goodness. So, what or who are we committed to serve? Why do we serve? How might we be "good workers in the Lord's vineyard"?