

First reading Isaiah 5:1-7

‘The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.’

Let me sing for my beloved
my love song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
and he looked for it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.
What more was there to do for my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
When I looked for it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briars and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

Responsorial Psalm 80(79): 9,12-16,19-20 R Isaiah 5:7

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
It stretched out its branches to the sea;
to the River it stretched out its shoots.

Then why have you broken down its walls?
It is plucked by all who pass by the way.
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,
devoured by the beasts of the field.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore;
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the stock your right hand has planted,
the son you have claimed for yourself.

give us life that we may call upon your name.
Bring us back, O Lord God of hosts;
let your face shine forth, and we shall be saved.

Second reading Philippians 4:6-9

‘Practise these things, and the God of peace will be with you.’

Brothers and Sisters: Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in
Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is
true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever
is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if
there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of
praise: think about these things. What you have learned
and received and heard and seen in me — practise
these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel Acclamation Cf. John 15:16

Alleluia, alleluia.

I chose you out of the world, says the Lord,
that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit
should abide.

Alleluia.

Gospel Matthew 21:33-43

‘He will let out the vineyard to other tenants.’

At that time: Jesus said to the chief priests and the
elders of the people, ‘Hear another parable. There was a
master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a
fence round it and dug a wine press in it and built a
tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another
country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his
servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants
took his servants and beat one, killed another, and
stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than
at first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent
his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But
when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves,
“This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his
inheritance.” And they took him and threw him out of
the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner
of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’
They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a
miserable death and let out the vineyard to other
tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.’
Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the
Scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has
become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and
it is marvellous in our eyes”? Therefore I tell you, the
kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given
to a people producing its fruits.’

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Feast days this week

Monday 5th October: St Faustina Kowalaka

Tuesday 6th October: St Bruno

Wednesday 7th October: Our Lady of the
Rosary

Friday 9th October: St John Henry Newman

Saturday 10th October: St Paulinus of York

Our first reading today, along with the psalm and Gospel, have to do with the image of the vine. The First reading and Gospel seem to have parallel narratives. The vine, here and elsewhere in scripture is often a symbol of the people of Israel.

Isaiah describes in detail how God in his love cared for the vineyard: he dug the soil, cleared it of stones, planted top quality vines, dug a winepress and built a tower. He expected it to yield good quality grapes, but got only sour ones. There's deep emotion in his question "What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?"

Now the vineyard, identified clearly as the House of Israel, will become a wasteland, undug, unpruned, overgrown with briars, dried up. The imagery becomes reality: instead of justice, there was bloodshed; instead of integrity, distress. God is disappointed with his people.

The psalm picks up the theme. God brings the vine, his people, out of Egypt and it becomes a great vineyard, and then it is broken down and destroyed. The psalmist recognises that the reason for this is that Israel has forsaken God. Now there is a prayer for God to return, revisit his vine, protect it and give it new life. "Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved."

In the Gospel reading Jesus, now in Jerusalem during the last week of his life, tells another parable, after last week's 'yes and no' parable. He is addressing the religious leaders of his people. A landowner plants a vineyard, again with fence, winepress and tower. He lets it out to tenants. At vintage time he sends servants to collect his produce, and they are beaten up or killed. So he sends his son, expecting that they will respect him. But no! They throw him out of the vineyard and kill him. This will happen to Jesus in a couple of days' time.

When Jesus asks the leaders what will happen, they rightly suggest that the vineyard will be handed over to others. Jesus confirms their view. The kingdom of God will be taken from them and handed over to a different group of people who will produce good fruit. The imagery then changes from vines to a building: the stone which they will reject will become the corner stone of a new building, a new people, through the wonderful action of God in the raising of the crucified Jesus to life and the gift of the Spirit. And we, you and I, are members of that new people, stones in that new building.

Our second reading, from Paul's letter to the community in Philippi, outlines some of the ways in which we should try to live so as to bear fruit and be faithful. Paul invites us to fill our minds and hearts with everything which is noble, good and pure. He tells the Philippians to keep doing all that they have been taught by him and seen him do. Perhaps we should change that to all we have learned from Jesus and the things he did, the values he lived by, the kindness and compassion he showed.

I'm taken by that question in the first reading: What could I have done for you that I have not done? It is addressed to us today. God loves each of us so much; he sent Jesus to save us and show us how to live; through baptism he gave us the Spirit and made us his sons and daughters, who actually share his life, so that in the depth of our being we are one with him and can call him father (dad even). God is longing to take us home to live with him for ever in peace and joy. And what he asks of us is that we become loving people. In a book which I read recently the author suggests that our daily prayer should be 'make me grow in love'. That's all that matters. That is what life is about.

Reflection by Fr Michael T Winstanley SDB

The Cycle of Prayer **Justice and Peace in the World**

especially on Harvest Fast Day: 1st Friday on October

Background

The Harvest Fast day is one of two such days organised by CAFOD. The money offered from the fasting is usually collected at Mass on the following Sunday.

Prayer

*O God, who show a father's care for all,
grant, in your mercy,
that the members of the human race,
to whom you have given a single origin,
may form in peace a single family
and always be united by a fraternal spirit.*

Roman Missal