

Lectio Divina of 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time - A (October 1 2020)

Opening Prayer: *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, Thank you for this time to gather together virtually with our brothers and sisters and for the opportunity to study and discuss that we are justified by our Faith in our Lord Jesus who inspire us to live our daily lives bearing abundant fruits. As we meditate now the Sunday liturgy, we ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon us for His divine wisdom to understand your words and their hidden meaning. It is wonderful to know that You have surrounded us with thousands of witnesses to Your faithfulness and Your love. You have given us thousands of angels who stand guard to protect us, and thousands of fellow believers who testify to Your love and inspire us to greater things. Heavenly Father, in these and many other ways, You have given us all we need for fellowship, support and protection, and we praise You! Lord, we wish to pray with one of the most beautiful images of the Old Testament: “Do not forsake the vineyard your right hand planted”. Continue to cultivate and enrich it with Your favored love. May Your Word in this Sunday's liturgy be hope and consolation for us. May we meditate on them and let them resonate in our hearts.*

1st Reading: A Reading from the book of Prophet Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes. Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but overgrown with thorns and briars; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it. The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Commentary: *The song of the Vineyard speaks about the Israelites whom God chose as His own and placed them on a very fruitful hill and fenced it, took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, gathered the stones out of it. He planted it with the choicest vine, set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their*

acquaintance with God. He built a tower in the midst of it. The temple was this tower where God promised to meet his people. In spite of all these blessings, privileges and favors, what He truly received from them was only disappointment which saddened him.

Responsorial Psalm (80) The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it. It put forth its foliage to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Why have you broken down its walls, so that every passer-by plucks its fruit, The boar from the forest lays it waste, and the beasts of the field feed upon it? R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Once again, O Lord of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong. R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name. O Lord, God of hosts, restore us; if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved. R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel

2nd Reading: A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 4:6-9

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Commentary: St. Paul tells us not to have anxiety at all. Is it possible? What is anxiety? It is struggle and spiritual battle in our cognitive, emotional and physiological mind. For some of us, it is a way of life, having uneasiness in our mind over anticipated event. While some of our anxieties are indeed acceptable, much of it is

misdirected imagination, paralyzing our life and spirit. what causes anxiety? financial constrains, dealing with sickness and sick people, loss of dear ones, fear of being alone, irresponsible children, broken marriages, fear of death, wrong choices and misplaced priorities and so on. How to stop this life killing anxiety? St. Paul's advice is to turn our anxiety into prayer. If we want to stop anxiety, we have to pray more. In prayer, we will have the peace of Jesus. True peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control of our life. Let the peace of Jesus guard our heart against anxiety.

Gospel Reading: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ / Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Meditation: *The parable of the wicked tenants is a summary of the Entire Bible. God chose the Israelites as His own and gave them the Promised Land. He wanted them to flourish and bear fruits abundantly and so He sent many kings, priests and prophets as his representatives to guide them and they were rejected by his own people who ultimately Jesus, the savior of the humanity. Having this background in our mind, we can easily identify the 6 characters of the Gospel. The landowner is God. The vineyard is Israel. The tenants are the Jewish religious leaders. The landowner's sons are the faithful prophets, priests and kings who preached to Israel. The son is Jesus and other tenants are the gentiles.*

What is the point Jesus is making in today's Gospel? God wanted to reach the Israelites with his everlasting love and for that he sent his faithful representatives who were not listened to and received well by his people and finally God sent his only son so that the people will accept him as their messiah and receive eternal life. But they were hard hearted, unwilling and arrogant to accept the messages of grace and salvation. In short, they rejected their messiah. To convey this hardheartedness of the Jews, Jesus used the beautiful metaphor of rejected stone becoming the corner stone. Cornerstone is at the centre, holding the entire building. If the corner stone is removed, the entire structure would fall down without any support. No stone was more important than the cornerstone because the integrity of the whole structure depended on the cornerstone. Jesus referred to himself as "the cornerstone". Although He was rejected by many of his people, he became the corner stone of the church after his resurrection.

Are we really connected to Jesus the corner stone? If we are connected to him, we are safe and secure. How many in our own families are deaf and dumb to God's grace? We, as stones to the cornerstone, have our responsibility to establish connection between the spiritually dead stones and the cornerstone. In our efforts to make connection, perhaps we may experience the pains of rejection by our own brothers and sisters and children like Joseph was rejected by his brothers. They may reject and refuse to listen to us when we reach them with the words of grace and encouragement. They may not see us as God's instruments of healing and grace. During those moments, let us not be discouraged rather energize ourselves in prayer to face rejection with prophetic courage and optimism. We ask the Lord to make us realistic: If Jesus was rejected, who are we? Therefore let us not lose heart rather continue to be connected to our cornerstone Jesus and make sincere efforts to connect the spiritually dead stones with Jesus, the corner stone. May we be always connected to Jesus the cornerstone in prayer and prayerful reading of the word of God

Concluding prayer: Loving Father, Our nation is like a vineyard that you planted with the choicest of vines, cleared of stones and on fertile soil. There is nothing more that you could have done for your vineyard than what you have done. You continue to look for a crop of good grapes. Make us conscious of our Christian foundation in the country. We confess our sins of secularism, modernism, moral relativism which continue to push you away from our politics, schools and other public spaces and as a result, we helplessly live with those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. We confess that We have rejected You and and spurned your word. We ask you to forgive us for these sins and to turn our hearts back to you. May your love and mercy be upon us, families, society, and our nation that we respond to your love and mercy be being faithful to you and to each other in following your commandments coming from your Holy Bible and taught by our Mother Church , your divine authority on earth.