

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year

Two crossword clues have involved vineyards and the growers of grapes recently. One was a three letter word and the other a thirteen letter word. I knew neither and had to wait until the following day to find out that another word for a grower of grapes is a viticulturist and a French vineyard is also called a cru.

In Isaiah's time the vineyard was a metaphor for the people of God and in the reading we heard how God lovingly prepared the ground and provided everything necessary, but the people failed to produce the fruit of justice and integrity, resulting in the destruction of the vineyard – and that of the people themselves, overrun by the Assyrians. Have we experienced spending time and energy on people and work fruitlessly, experiencing a lack of authenticity or realising family and friends have been neglected, perhaps even stunting our own growth?

In the Gospel we also have a vineyard, but this time the emphasis is on the tenants. It was a common practice for the owners of vineyards to live miles away and to get tenants to look after the vines and produce the wine for the owner. In this parable told by Jesus to the chief priests and scribes as last week the tenants not only refuse to hand over the produce but they mistreat the owners servants, no matter how many he sent. Finally he sent his son thinking that they would respect his son, but they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Jesus then asks a question to which the answer is, like last week obvious. The owner will punish these tenants and let the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce. This answer gives Jesus the opportunity to speak in such a way that the chief priests and the elders realise that in the story they, or rather their ancestors were the first tenants, the owner was God, the servants were the prophets, whom their ancestors refused to listen to and mistreated, and the son is Jesus himself, whom they will take out of Jerusalem and put to death.

In this part of the Gospel Jesus tells a number of parables which highlight the failings of the religious leaders who either could not or would not accept who he was. As a result Jesus turns to others, the sick, the diseased, the outcast, the tax collector, the public sinner. They do recognise who he is, they change their behaviour after meeting him, being healed, forgiven and restored by him, bearing the fruit of justice and integrity spoken of in the first reading. If we are the current tenants of the vineyard what fruit will we bear? Had today not been a Sunday, we would have been keeping the memory of St Francis of Assisi so we might ask are we good stewards of God's creation, treating the earth with respect rather than plundering it, making sure that we never do harm to animals, reflecting on the food we eat. Promoting justice both at home and further afield, promoting greater equality, uncovering prejudice and discrimination in its many forms and working for their eradication, involving others in decision making, holding our elected representatives to account especially in their dealings with the most vulnerable. Jesus closes the gospel with a challenge and a promise. The challenge is to bear fruit, the promise is nothing less than the kingdom of God, here and now.

## Bidding Prayers for the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year

Celebrant:

There is no need to worry, but if there is anything you need, pray for it. With these words of the second reading in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For Pope Francis and all the Bishops of the Church – that they will be courageous and compassionate leaders of their people.

Lord in your mercy

For world leaders – that they will use their office to bring people together, reconciling differences, acting justly and working for peace in their own countries and between countries.

Lord in you mercy

For the people of Lebanon in danger of sinking into civil war and for the people of Yemen on the edge of starvation – that their leaders will do all they can to work for reconciliation in Lebanon, and provide the food so desperately needed in Yemen.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who are ill, those facing the prospect of treatment, those who have recently had operations and those in hospital – that they will experience the healing presence of the Lord and the skill and concern of those who care for them.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, especially all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, for Giles Greaves, Glynn Hughes, Ann Daish, Florence Annie Freidrich and Gerard Palmer whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions (Pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Father, fill our minds with all that is good, all that is true, all that is noble and all that will give you praise. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen