

Twenty-Seventh Sunday Ordinary Time

† Sunday, 4 October 2020

In England and Wales – Thanksgiving for the Harvest – CAFOD collection



In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer: For Prisoners and their Dependents

Keynote: Destined to be spiritual and bear fruit in the Lord's vineyard

Prophet Isaiah 5:1-7

'Let me sing to my friend the song of his love for his vineyard,' says the prophet. What follows is a parable set in the style of a song, which tells of the love that the Lord God has for the people, and how disappointing is their response, for *'my friend has a vineyard on a fertile hillside, he dug the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted choice vines in it... he expected it to yield grapes, but sour grapes was all that it gave.'*

The contrast is between the lavish care and generous expectations of the vineyard owner, and in the end the poor harvest return – for the grapes are not just *'sour,'* but rotten to the roots! So given that God's People are unproductive and unfaithful, what will the owner do? *'I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug; overgrown with briars and the thorn. I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.'* The vineyard of the Lord – that chosen place that had prompted the initial song of pride and love – has turned out to be without value. There is no pride in it.

Today's gospel provides us with this clear lesson if we do not heed: *'the kingdom of God be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'*

Responsorial Psalm 79 [80] – A psalm seeking God's favour again

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 4:6-9

The apostle Paul while engaged on his missionary travels was repeatedly imprisoned. So once again he writes from prison to the faithful of the Church. *'There is no need to worry,'* he says, *'but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving.'* There is somehow great strength in these words. So often our prayer is one only of asking, and we forget the all-important 'thank you'. Paul reassures us, *'that the peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.'*

Finally the apostle urges his readers, *'Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.'*

Gospel according to Matthew 21:33-43

Here another parable about a vineyard, that Matthew understands as applying to the Reign of God [the People of God], and carries within it a hint of the expected return of Christ at the end of time.

'When vintage time drew near the landowner sent his servants to the tenants to collect the produce. But the tenants seized his servants thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third.' After other servants had been sent and dealt with in a similar fashion, *'the landowner sent his son to them. "They will respect my son", he said'*. But the wicked tenants seized the heir and killed him. Then Jesus says by way of a warning for all who will listen, *'It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see... I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to people who will produce its fruit.'*