

Friday of the Second Week of Lent

Gospel text (Mt 21:33-43.45-46): 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.

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”

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Today, Jesus, with the parable of the homicidal tenants, speaks about the betrayal of trust; He compares the vineyard to the people of Israel and the wine growers to the chiefs of the chosen people. The Kingdom of God had been entrusted to them and to all the descendants of Abraham, but they have embezzled the heritage: “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” (Mt 21:43).

At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, the Good News seems to be addressed only to the people of Israel. Already in the Old Covenant, the chosen people had the mission of announcing and bringing salvation to all other nations. But Israel has been unfaithful to its mission. Jesus, the intermediate of the New Covenant, will gather around Him the twelve Apostles, a symbol of the “new” Israel, called to yield a harvest of fruits of eternal life and to announce their salvation to all the other peoples.

This new Israel is the Church, all the baptized. We have received in the person of Jesus and in His message, a most unique gift we must make bear fruit. We cannot resign ourselves to an individualist and shortsighted experience of our faith; we must transmit it and give it to anyone who may come close. Hence, we can derive that the first fruit is to live our faith in the warmth of our family, that of the Christian community. That will be easy, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Mt 18:20).

But ours is an open Christian community, that is, basically missionary (second fruit). Because of the strength and beauty of the Resurrected “in the midst of us”, the community is appealing in all its gestures and acts, and each one of its members has the capacity to engender men and women to the new life of the Resurrected. And a third fruit is for us to live with the conviction and certitude that we can find in the Gospel the solution to all our problems.

Let's live in the saintly Fear of God, lest the Kingdom of Heaven be taken from us and given to others.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“God needs not toil, but obedience.” (Saint John Chrysostom)

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“The history of the Prophets, their sufferings, tells that the servants are manhandled. Although the "son" will suffer the same fate, the "Owner" will not abandon the vineyard: he will lease it to others. Isn't what is said in the parable actually a description of our present world?.” (Benedict XVI)

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“The Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God. On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about again. That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing (Rom 11:13-26)?.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 755)