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”

Fr. Melcior QUEROL i Solà
(Ribes de Freser, Girona, Spain)

Today, through the parable of the murderous vine-growers, Jesus speaks to us of infidelity. He compares the vineyard to Israel and the vine-growers to the leaders of the chosen people. The Kingdom of God had

been entrusted to them and to all of Abraham's descendants, but they misappropriated the inheritance: "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 Israel. The chosen people, already in the Old Covenant, have the mission of announcing and bringing salvation to all nations. But Israel has not been faithful to its mission. Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, will gather around him the twelve Apostles, symbol of the "new" Israel, called to bear the fruits of eternal life and to announce salvation to all peoples.

This new Israel is the Church, all the baptized. We have received, in the person of Jesus and in his message, a unique gift that we must make bear fruit. We cannot settle for an individualistic experience closed to our faith; we must communicate it and give it to each person who approaches us. From this we can see that the first fruit is that we live our faith in the warmth of family, that of the Christian community. This will be simple, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

But it is about an open Christian community, that is, eminently missionary (second fruit). By the strength and beauty of the Risen One “in our midst,” the community is attractive in all its gestures and acts, and each of its members has the capacity to engender men and women to the new life of the Risen One. And a third fruit is that we live with the conviction and certainty that in the Gospel we find the solution to all problems.

Let us live in the holy fear of God, lest the Kingdom be taken from us and given to others.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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

- “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)

- “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, № 755)