Monday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 12:1-12): Jesus began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and left on a journey.

At the proper time he sent a servant to the tenants to obtain from them some of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant. And that one they beat over the head and treated shamefully. He sent yet another whom they killed. So, too, many others; some they beat, others they killed. He had one other to send, a beloved son. He sent him to them last of all, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they seized him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come, put the tenants to death, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture passage: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?"

They were seeking to arrest him, but they feared the crowd, for they realized that he had addressed the parable to them. So they left him and went away.

"He sent a servant to the tenants to obtain from them some of the produce of the vineyard"

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Today, the Lord invites us to walk through his vineyard: "A man planted a vineyard… Then he leased it to tenant farmers" (Mark 12:1). We are all tenants of that vineyard. The vineyard is our own spirit, the Church, and the whole world. God wants us to bear fruit. First, our personal holiness; then, a constant apostolate among our friends, whom our example and our words encourage to draw ever closer to Christ; finally, the world, which will become a better place to live if we sanctify our professional work, our social relationships, and our duty to the common good.

What kind of tenants are we? Are we those who work hard, or those who become irritated when the owner sends his servants to collect the rent? We can oppose those who have the responsibility to help us provide the fruit that God expects from us. We can object to the teachings of Holy Mother Church and the Pope, the bishops, or perhaps, more simply, to our parents, our spiritual director, or that good friend who is trying to help us. We can even become aggressive and try to hurt or even "kill" them with our criticism and negative comments. We should examine ourselves regarding the real motives for such a stance. Perhaps we need a deeper understanding of our faith; maybe we should learn to know ourselves better, to conduct a better examination of conscience, so that we can discover the reasons why we do not want to bear fruit.

Let us ask Our Mother Mary for her help so that we may work with love, under the guidance of the Pope. We can all be "good shepherds" and "fishers" of men. "So let us go and pray to the Lord to help us bear fruit that endures. Only in this way will the earth be changed from a valley of tears to a garden of God" (Benedict XVI). We could bring our spirit, the spirit of our friends, or the spirit of the whole world closer to Jesus Christ if only we would read and meditate on the teachings of the Holy Father and try to put them into practice.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Thus do I behold thee, dear Jesus! A dearest and most loving and good Jesus, who alone, as our Savior, couldest save us from our ancient wounds, who delivered thee over to so bitter a death? Who could so lower thee with the indignity of those wounds so harsh and moreover so degrading? O good Jesus, thou dearest vine?” (Saint Bonaventure)

- “He called us with love, he protects us. Yet then he gives us freedom, he gives us all this love ‘on lease’. It’s as if he were to say to us: protect and keep my love just as I safeguard you. This is the dialogue between God and us: to safeguard love.” (Francis)

- “Without the Creator, the creature vanishes (Vatican Council II). This is the reason why believers know that the love of Christ urges them to bring the light of the living God to those who do not know him or who reject him.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 49)