



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

October 4, 2020

The Fruit God Expects

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Chosen People were often compared to a garden or vineyard that God had planted and cared for. First, he placed them in the Garden of Eden. Then he led them to flourish in Egypt before accommodating them in the Promised Land. After all his care and cultivation, he expected to find a fruitful return. In the Song of Songs and then with Jesus himself, not only are the people of God compared to a vineyard, but each of our souls is compared to a vineyard where God plants seeds,

waters, and expects to find new growth by thirty-, sixty-, or one hundredfold.

In the image of the Chosen People, the Church, or our souls, one thing is constant: God expects a return on his love. Not because he is selfish and in need of our response but because he knows our happiness depends on receiving and showing him that love.

Jesus says the vineyard will be taken away from those who don't care for it and given to those who will produce its fruit. In the same way, grace will be directed away from some and toward those who accept it and produce faith and love.

This is not a threat or "Catholic guilt." This is a true Father letting his children know he loves them too much to not take them seriously. He gives and gives for our growth and maturing, but if that generosity isn't sincerely embraced and appreciated, we will miss out on the true love of God+. Now is the time to accept his love and enjoy the fruits. +

God expects a return on his love. Not because he is selfish, but because he knows our happiness depends on showing him love.

A Word from Pope Francis

Many members of our communities yearn to receive the Eucharist at one table, as the concrete expression of full unity. We experience the pain of those who share their whole lives, but cannot share God's redeeming presence at the eucharistic table...We long for this wound in the Body of Christ to be healed.

—Joint statement, Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the Reformation, October 31, 2016



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 5:1-7

The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, / the people of Judah, his cherished plant.

Philippians 4:6-9

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Matthew 21:33-43

[Jesus said,] "I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How does our Lord want to see fruit and growth in your life?
- Have I squandered God's harvest in my life?

Making Eye Contact with Jesus

By Kathleen M. Basi

One ordinary afternoon, I pulled up to a stoplight—an ordinary mom driving an ordinary minivan with three small children chattering unintelligibly in the back. Beside our minivan stood a man in a camouflage jacket holding a cardboard sign that read, HOMELESS—HUNGRY—ANYTHING HELPS.

At moments like these, the wisdom of the world wrestles with the wisdom of Christ. You're not supposed to give beggars money because they might use it to buy drugs; instead, you're supposed to support the shelters that care for them. Still, I can't escape the conviction that when Christ said, "Whatever you did for the least of these" (Matthew 25:40), he didn't intend for us to just scatter our largesse from a safe distance. He meant for us to take a risk and look into his face, person to person. Yet we hardly ever do. We stare straight ahead and pretend we don't even see them, because eye contact with a beggar is a signal that we're ready to open our wallets.

As I gripped the steering wheel in my agony of indecision, I realized the noise in the back seat had shifted. My children were waving enthusiastically at the homeless man while they laughed and shouted, "Hi! Hi! Hi!"

In that moment, Jesus' words about becoming like children rang in my mind: "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). It was in this moment that those words



made sense for the first time. *My children are better Christians than I am*, I thought.

Obviously, it's easier for kids than for us. We're the ones who have money to give. We know, or at least we think we know, the whole story—the mental illness, the addictions, and the bad choices that land people in such a place. Kids don't get caught up in that, so they simply acknowledge the face of Christ.

Maybe that's why Jesus urged us to be childlike. Often, adults see a problem and, without realizing it, throw a roadblock in the way of solutions. Perhaps our mission as a Church is to stop focusing on the obstacles and strip every question down to the essentials: How do I acknowledge the face of Christ?

After all, the face of poverty is the face of Christ. And regardless of where I give money, I still have a responsibility to acknowledge his presence.

These days I keep a few singles in my wallet, and I roll down my window when I see a person begging at a stoplight. Maybe that person will use the money wisely, maybe not. I'm certainly not giving enough to help much. But at least it gives me the reason to be a little more childlike—and make eye contact with Jesus. +

Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.

Matthew 25:40

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your vineyard of love. Remove my shortcomings that I may cultivate your gifts of compassion and peace.

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 5–10

Monday, Weekday:
Gal 1:6–12 / Lk 10:25–37

Tuesday, Weekday:
Gal 1:13–24 / Lk 10:38–42

Wednesday, Our Lady of the Rosary:
Gal 2:1–2, 7–14 / Lk 11:1–4

Thursday, Weekday:
Gal 3:1–5 / Lk 11:5–13

Friday, Weekday:
Gal 3:7–14 / Lk 11:15–26

Saturday, Weekday:
Gal 3:22–29 / Lk 11:27–28

Bringing Home
the Word 

October 4, 2020

© 2020 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2020 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.