

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

A mother ran into the bedroom when she heard her seven year-old son scream. She found his two year-old sister pulling his hair. She gently released the little girl's grip and said comfortingly to the boy, "There, there. She didn't mean it. She doesn't know that hurts." He nodded his acknowledgement, and she left the room. As she started down the hall the little girl screamed. Rushing back in, she asked, "What happened?" The little boy replied, "She knows now."

Dear Friends,

The world we live in has a very mixed reality. On the one hand, the world is full of goodness, generosity, sincerity, creativity, imagination, and ingenuity. Daily we see real advancement in moral sensitivity, knowledge, art, and technology. On the other hand, it is also full of infidelity, sin, injustice, greed, individualism, and many other rampant forces that constitute a virtual conspiracy against the poor, the family, sexual integrity, and compassion.

Today's readings ask us to be grateful and be faithful to God's covenant. Grapes hold deep significance in the Bible, particularly in the context of vineyards in ancient Israel. These vineyards weren't just sources of fruit and wine; they symbolized the relationship between God and His people. The prophet likens Israel to a vineyard tended by the Lord. This imagery carries a message of care and expectation. The poetic song describes God's nurturing efforts and Israel's shortcomings, represented by the metaphor of "wild grapes" – a symbol of sin.

In the second reading, St. Paul asks us to be truthful. This week we as priests of the Diocese had Clergy Congress. Bishop Ricken gave a presentation at the opening talk. He said that he was grateful for so many things in the Diocese. He asks us to be grateful for the people we have in our community. He said that we are all worried about people leaving the church or not coming to church. Rather let us be grateful that we have so many committed families and people in spite of all the challenges to follow Jesus in their lives.

St. Paul talks about the same. He asks us not to have anxiety, and pray with thanksgiving. Prayer is the way believers communicate all things to God and express their complete dependence on him. He asks to have the virtue of truth, honor, justice, purity, beauty, and graciousness.

The parable of the wicked tenants, recounted in the gospel holds a mirror to the Jewish leaders, who recognize its pointed message directed at them. Across history, prophets have faced mistreatment, and now, these leaders are poised to apprehend Jesus, unmistakably depicted as the son in the narrative. The parable serves as a poignant call for us to actively protect and support those who courageously speak the truth, despite the challenges they may encounter. Just as the landowner's servants faced adversity, contemporary truth-bearers also confront opposition, and it's our responsibility to ensure their safety and amplify their voices.

The parable also emphasizes the importance of caring for the vineyards in our lives. The vineyard is a metaphor for the blessings and responsibilities God entrusts us with. Just as the tenants were expected to cultivate and tend the vineyard, we're called to nurture and steward the gifts bestowed upon us. This concept underscores the significance of being accountable and diligent stewards of our relationships, talents, and resources. By actively caring for our "vineyards", we honor God's intentions for us and contribute to the flourishing of our lives and the lives of those around us.