

Sunday Message

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Within your will, O Lord, all things are established,
and there is none that can resist your will.
For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth,
and all that is held within the circle of heaven;
you are the Lord of all.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who in the abundance of your kindness
surpass the merits and the desires of those
who entreat you,
pour out your mercy upon us
to pardon what conscience dreads
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 5:1-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Let me sing to my friend
the song of his love for his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.
He dug the soil, cleared it of stones,
and planted choice vines in it.
In the middle he built a tower,
he dug a press there too.
He expected it to yield grapes,
but sour grapes were all that it gave.
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
I ask you to judge
between my vineyard and me.
What could I have done for my vineyard
that I have not done?
I expected it to yield grapes.
Why did it yield sour grapes instead?
Very well, I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on,
and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on.
I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.
I will command the clouds
to rain no rain on it.
Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the House of Israel,
and the men of Judah that chosen plant.
He expected justice, but found bloodshed,
integrity, but only a cry of distress.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 79

Response:

The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.

1. You brought a vine out of Egypt;
to plant it you drove out the nations.
It stretched out its branches to the sea,
to the Great River it stretched out its
shoots. (R.)
2. Then why have you broken down its
walls?
It is plucked by all who pass by,
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,
devoured by the beasts of the field. (R.)
3. God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted. (R.)
4. And we shall never forsake you again:
give us life that we may call upon your
name.
God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us and we shall be
saved. (R.)

SECOND READING

Philippians 4:6-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians.

There is no need to worry; but if there is
anything you need, pray for it, asking God for
it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace
of God, which is so much greater than we can
understand, will guard your hearts and your
thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers,
fill your minds with everything that is true,
everything that is noble, everything that is good
and pure, everything that we love and honour,
and everything that can be thought virtuous or
worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that
you learnt from me and have been taught by
me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the
God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:33-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders
of the people, "Listen to another parable.
There was a man, a landowner, who planted a
vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in
it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants
and went abroad. When vintage time drew near
he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his
produce. But the tenants seized his servants,
thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third.
Next he sent some more servants, this time
a larger number, and they dealt with them in
the same way. Finally he sent his son to them.
'They will respect my son,' he said. But when
the tenants saw the son, they said to each other,
'This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and
take over his inheritance.' So they seized him
and threw him out of the vineyard and killed
him. Now when the owner of the vineyard

comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They
answered, "He will bring those wretches to a
wretched end and lease the vineyard to other
tenants who will deliver the produce to him
when the season arrives." Jesus said to them,
"Have you never read in the scriptures:
It was the stone rejected by the builders
that became the keystone.
This was the Lord's doing
and it is wonderful to see?"
"I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will
be taken from you and given to a people who
will produce its fruit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, we pray,
the sacrifices instituted by your commands
and, through the sacred mysteries,
which we celebrate with dutiful service,
graciously complete the sanctifying work
by which you are pleased to redeem us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord is good to those who hope in him,
to the soul that seeks him.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, almighty God,
that we may be refreshed and nourished
by the Sacrament which we have received,
so as to be transformed into what we consume.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE WORD

THE LORD'S VINEYARD

(MATTHEW 21:33-43)

Once again, we come across the symbol of the vineyard. In the Hebrew Bible, this image is often used in relation to Israel, and we found it in the parable of the generous owner who paid all his workers at the same rate.

Jesus tells this parable we hear today to the chief priests and elders, who have a position of authority among the people, and therefore one of responsibility for their wellbeing and care. The thrust of the parable concerns the Jewish leaders' plot to have Jesus killed: Matthew thus presents their treatment of Jesus as being in line with previous leaders' conduct towards the earlier prophets (although there is no evidence of any biblical prophets being murdered). We might remember that Matthew's community has a good proportion of Jewish members, so the rejection he speaks of is of the Jewish leaders, and not Israel as a whole. It is the tenants who are replaced, not the vineyard itself. Perhaps the better understanding of the expression that the kingdom of God will be "given to a people who will produce its fruit" is that it applies to the leaders of the Jewish-Christian community of which Matthew is a member. ■

REFLECT

A worrying phenomenon in recent times has been the rise of prejudice against all sorts of people. Suspicion of "foreigners", immigrants, people seeking asylum and refuge has become commonplace throughout the northern hemisphere. The return of antisemitism especially has been noticeable in many quarters. In the past, this has been fuelled especially by texts from the Gospels according to Matthew and John, which have been interpreted as laying the blame for the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus squarely at the feet of the Jewish people as a whole. The Christian Church was portrayed as the true Israel, replacing God's covenant with Israel.

Critical scholarship of the New Testament has called into question this blanket blaming of the entire Jewish people: the leaders, chiefly concerned with the political implications of Jesus' teaching being a threat to their social position, were the ones who brought about Jesus' death, and had him executed, not as the Son of God, but on the political charge of claiming to be "the King of the Jews". Given the fact that the early Church existed in the Roman Empire, it was diplomatic to shift the responsibility for the crucifixion away from the Roman authorities and onto the Jewish leaders.

We might remember that one of the ingredients which went into the writing of the Gospels was the situation of the community in which the evangelist, in this case, Matthew, was at work. So the hostility between Jesus and the leaders of his time reflects the later difficulties between the Church and the synagogue. Jesus was a Jew, and many of his teachings are in harmony with those of rabbis whose sayings have come down to us through the writings of their disciples. Pope Francis has shown by his actions the importance of respect for people of other faiths, especially Jews and Muslims, out of which genuine friendship can grow. ■

SAY

Jesus is the true vine:
we are his branches.
(see John 15:5)

LEARN

The vineyard is a symbol frequently used in the Bible to represent Israel.

The chief priests and elders were essentially political figures: their power base was the Jerusalem Temple.

Jesus was put to death on a political charge, which was published on the inscription on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".

DO

Find out if there is an ecumenical or interfaith group in your local area: consider going to a meeting to discover what members of other denominations or religions actually are like, and what they really believe.

