

Homily – Fr. Larry Richardt
October 8, 2023
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
20:36 – 28:13

When parents are in deep distress after being let down or rejected by their children, they may well voice the lament of God in the First Reading from Isaiah: “What more could I have done for my children that I did not do?”

For any of us, there is no pain more intense or distressing than that of being rejected. Like a sword of sorrow, it pierces our heart and leaves us deeply wounded. Rejection is something we all encounter on our journey through life and Jesus was no exception.

The terrible truth is that God’s son came to earth, showed his love in every possible way and was rejected. In this very hard-hitting Gospel we are exposed to the blunt truth that God has done everything possible for us as a people by sending the Son to live among us. Often, in return we have turned our back and offered God nothing but ingratitude and indifference.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to see ourselves in this parable. Each of us is a tenant, cultivating a small portion of God’s vineyard and when harvest time arrives, we are expected to produce the fruits of right living – our caring, sharing and showing forth Gospel love in our daily lives. By doing this we put into practice during the week what we profess to believe at our weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

This story challenges us to keep working in God’s service and not to become complacent and smug. We examine our conscience to see whether we are producing the gifts of God’s love.

Are we deepening our trust in God’s Providence?

Is our obedience to God’s will a wholehearted search?

Are we practicing greater forgiveness, acceptance, sharing and service in our relationships with those with whom we live and work?

Are we responsible stewards of the goods of Earth, non-acquisitive, contemplative of the creative and generous hand of God in all the things and people that touch our lives?

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul gives us a shorter examination of our lives:

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Merciful and forgiving as God is, God is bitterly disappointed when we lazily sit back and fail to appreciate the beauty of our lives, the joy of our families and God's loving care.

There will be a day of reckoning for all of us. A time will come when we will be answerable for the way we have carried out the task God has given us to do. What then, if at the end of our life here on earth, we have nothing to offer God but the sour grapes of a pagan lifestyle?

We will have smothered a beautiful being with indifference, ingratitude, selfishness and neglect, wasting God's grace. God continues to nurture the vineyard – us! The Gospel today asks us to attend carefully to the kinds of fruit we are bearing and to be cautious about the sorts of stones we are rejecting.