

27th Sunday (A)

- I'm sure you watched at least part of the Trump/Biden debate, if it can at all be called that, the other day, & I'm sure you also would have deemed it disgraceful.
- But it seems to be reflective of the deplorable behaviour of many political leaders today who unashamedly lie & cheat; who manipulate facts & events to suit their own political agendas; who are quite blatantly self-serving & have no regard for the care of the people they are meant to serve, or act as good & responsible stewards for the earth on our behalf.
- The further sad & tragic consequence of their behaviour is the message that it sends to people, especially the young – that this is acceptable, particularly in a time when we need good leadership.
- I don't know whether it is for you, but for me this behaviour seems to be intensified in this global time of Pandemic – a crucial time when we need to be focussed on changes we make now to live in a new post-COVID world.
- These are some of the thoughts I had & the lens through which I read today's Gospel.
- Jesus uses rich ecological imagery in today's parable, revealing humanity's ongoing role in God's great act of creation.
- We are all charged to tend what God has planted & built.
- In the end it is for His purpose, not ours. But this story also presages a dark turn, where selfishness brings about disaster.
- It is hard to read this without thinking of our rapidly warming climate, our polluted seas, & our poisoned rivers.
- Moreover, while this story concerns a bunch of tenants who violently resist fulfilling their obligations, it is also a very pointed tale when read in the context in which it was told, because Jesus specifically told this one to the leaders of the people in his own time.
- As we hear this Gospel passage, we might wonder whether our leaders are doing the will of God regarding the vineyard of the earth.
- Is respect for creation high on their agenda, or is their priority the harvest?
- Are the vineyard's resources distributed fairly, or selfishly hoarded & consumed by a few?
- And do they listen to the will of the Creator, or silence His messengers with hateful words & actions?
- It is hard to read today's parable & not think about our world today: the parable describes greed, reckless ambition & astounding mismanagement.
- I'm not qualified to say anything about the crisis of our time but I do believe that it provides a moment to examine our own lives & how we are carrying out the trust placed on us, because God holds each of us accountable: What is happening on the international stage in some way reflects your life & mine.
- Through the image of the vineyard this story tells of God's relationship with God's people.

- God had invested greatly in the people &, yet, the return for God's loving investment was disappointing in the extreme...bloodshed in the land resulting in a great cry coming from the oppressed, instead of justice & integrity.
- But, the disappointing return on God's investment in God's people did not lead God to reject them.
- Instead, God invested more heavily in them, by giving them the son, as the parable of Jesus in today's Gospel makes clear.
- There are times when, regardless of what God seems to be doing for us, we simply rebel against God's plans. We stand in defiance.
- There are other times when we, who are disciples of Jesus, act as if the kingdom is ours.
- We might even marginalise or force out others with whom we do not agree, so that we have sole control.
- Even when the investment was met with violence & rejection, God did not take back that investment.
- Rather, in the words of the Gospel, the rejected stone became the corner-stone of a new community, to which all people were invited to belong.
- God, having given the Son only to see him crucified, gave him again as the risen Christ & invited all people to become his followers, &, thereby, find life: The readings suggest that God is slow to give up on us.
- God continues to invest in us even when the return is small or even risky.
- Most of us are only prepared to invest for so long, when a return is not forthcoming, but God is much more persistent than we are.
- God keeps on offering us the gift of Jesus.
- Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, God puts before us the gift of God's Son anew, in a sense, this is the sacrament of God's persistent love.
- God does, nevertheless, expect some return for this investment of love.
- In the words of the two parables in today's 1st & Gospel readings, God looks to us to bear the kind of fruit that God's investment in us has a right to expect - such fruit would certainly include the justice & integrity that the first reading refers to, but it also includes all that Paul refers to in today's 2nd Reading — 'everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good & pure, everything that can be thought virtuous & worthy of praise'.
- Are these the kinds of thoughts that occupy our minds? Because what we have in our minds becomes translated into what we do...into our actions.
- What can we do in our own little patch to build a better post COVID world. We can, by our own faithful example witness to a belief that this crisis offers an opportunity to not just rebuild the world by reproducing the world of before, but to cure it, heal it among those we live & work with.
- In this way we can give a positive example for our children of responsible & caring behavior.
- Sometime this weekend you might reflect on what God has invested in you, on the promise & commitment God makes to work through you, & ask what return would God look for from you for that investment.