

First Reading – Isaiah 5:1-7: A friend cultivates a vineyard with great care but gets wild grapes. He questions what more he could have done and decides to abandon the vineyard, letting it turn into a wasteland. This vineyard is an allegory for the house of Israel, where expected justice turns to chaos.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 80: God planted a vine from Egypt, cleared the land, and let it flourish. Then, its walls were broken, making it vulnerable to beasts and trespassers. A plea is made for divine care and restoration so that the vine, representing Israel, will thrive and its people will be saved.

Second Reading – Philippians 4:6-9: Don't worry, but instead bring your concerns to God through prayer. When you do, God's peace will guard your heart and mind. Focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, and lovely. By following this guidance and emulating good examples, you'll find peace.

Gospel – Matthew 21:33-43: A landowner leases a vineyard but the tenants mistreat his servants and kill his son. When asked, the elders agree that the owner will evict these tenants and find new ones. Jesus warns that those who reject the cornerstone will lose the kingdom of God.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Whenever the parable of the "wicked tenants" is read, it is likely immediately understood that Jesus was alluding to the Jewish leaders who sought to usurp God's authority over the people of Israel. They killed the prophets God sent to warn them and, ultimately, crucified Jesus Himself—the only Son of God. Consequently, the Kingdom of God was entrusted to those who would bear fruit for Him.

Therefore, this reflection will not focus on analyzing what is already widely understood; instead, it seeks to uncover the contemporary relevance of the parable and the warning it continues to offer us today.

1. The meaning of the tenants and the vineyard today.

The Vineyard of the Church: Just as the people of Israel of old were likened to a vineyard planted and tended by the Lord, the Catholic Church is God's "new people" (effectively succeeding the ancient Jewish people after their disobedience and betrayal of the covenant). Whether universal or local, the Church belongs to Jesus. Yet, there is no shortage of figures who abuse their positions to claim the Church as their own, manipulating the institution (be it a community or a parish) for personal gain or the pursuit of prestige. They remain obstinate, ignoring prophetic voices—or even silencing those who dare to point out abuses and wrongdoing—thereby effectively "killing the true Jesus" within the Church and leaving behind only a decline in faith and morality. For this reason, the Word of God in the parable of the "murderous tenants" remains ever relevant. It issues a special invitation to Church leaders—from the local Church level down to parish or religious communities—to remain constantly mindful of their roles and their manner of service, ensuring they align with the path God desires.

The vineyard of the soul: Each person is likened to a vineyard that God has planted and entrusted to our own stewardship, expecting us to yield fruit for Him. Yet, we often disregard the voice of conscience, ignore the teachings and corrections of those in authority, neglect the laws of God and the Church, and remain indifferent to hearing God's Word. Ultimately, we "kill" Jesus who dwells within our souls—abandoning the faith and facing eternal ruin. God's Word calls upon each of us to be self-aware, to guard our souls, and to make our lives fruitful for the cause of the Kingdom of God.

2. The Kingdom of God will be taken away and given to a people who are worthy...

“Therefore, I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit” (Mt 21:43).

If a gardener fails to perform well and instead causes trouble, the owner naturally dismisses him and entrusts the vineyard to others who will do a better job. Likewise, when the Kingdom of God is entrusted to a community or an individual who fails to foster its growth or bear fruit for the Lord, it is only fitting that it be taken away and given to a people or individual more worthy. The function of a vine branch is not merely to remain bare or to sprout leaves; it must bear fruit—specifically good fruit, not bad. Otherwise, it must be cut off to prevent harm to the vine itself and to the other branches. God grants us talents and opportunities; yet, if we do not diligently cultivate them, they will inevitably wither away.

God bestows faith upon us, but that faith requires purification and nurturing to grow. Otherwise—by failing to live out that faith—the very faith we once held may eventually grow cold and be lost.

Furthermore, consider a vineyard that draws life from the soil yet produces only leaves. This mirrors the state of selfish individuals who focus solely on themselves; though they receive abundant graces from God, they fail to share them with others, particularly lacking a missionary spirit. True love for God naturally bears fruit; those who maintain an intimate relationship with God will naturally live out a life of charity toward everyone.

Some vineyards produce poor fruit—perhaps due to a lack of nutrients from the soil or damage caused by pests. This represents those who are indifferent to God’s grace or who allow external influences to invade and erode their souls, rendering them unable to bear the fruit of good works and merit for the Church.

Lord Jesus, You have blessed us with the gift of faith and the privilege of being God’s children. Grant us the wisdom to use the talents and time You have given us to let our faith flourish through a virtuous daily life, so that when You return, we may be worthy of the reward of eternal life. Amen.