

### How Dedicated are we as both tenants, servants of God's Kingdom

Adopted from 'Catholic Exponent'

The Parable of the Tenants was first recorded by St. Mark. Today Matthew retells the same parable with certain accommodations to suit his purpose. In Matthew's context the slaves represent the prophets of the Old Testament. The first group of slaves were the prophets of Israel before the exile; the second, the prophets after the exile. Neither were well received by the people and finally the Lord of the vineyard sent his Son, Jesus Christ. He, too, was rejected.

As a result God chose a new people composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Now, as then, he calls them to become his own, the new people of God, the Church. To these chosen people he entrusts the Kingdom of God. He challenges them to yield a rich harvest.

How often we hear it repeated: 'The people are the Church.' 'We are the Church, we are God's people, called and gifted to build God's Kingdom here on earth.'

Like all parables, the Parable of the Tenants invites us to put ourselves into the story in order to discover a deeper meaning and apply it to ourselves.

Let's reflect on the parable from two points of view—that of the tenants and that of the slaves in service to their master.

In the first view we are the tenants. God has entrusted us with his vineyard and challenged us to bear fruit for the harvest. This is one of many Gospel invitations to become more actively involved in Christ's Church.

There is no simple formula which spells out what is required to be a 'good' Catholic. Permit me to be so bold as to suggest three obvious requirements. Good Catholics are those who attempt to live their lives in imitation of Jesus by observing the Ten Commandments and reflecting the eight beatitudes. Good Church members are those who contribute some of their time, talent and financial resources to the Church. This involves more than putting an envelope in the Sunday collection. It involves participation in parish activities and donating time and talent in service of others. Good Catholics are those who attend Mass on Sunday and participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church.

In a nutshell, these might be considered our principal responsibilities as Catholic Christians, tenants of the master's vineyard. From time to time we might fail in little ways but if we repeatedly fail to contribute anything significant to the harvest, the owner of the vineyard will send us a warning. Are we prepared to accept the messenger and heed the message? Hopefully, the answer is 'yes.' 'If not, the Kingdom will be taken away and given to another who will yield a rich harvest.'

In the second view, we are the slaves, the servants of God. It is our responsibility to remind the tenants of their obligation to contribute to the harvest. How earnestly do we accept our responsibility in this regard?

Are we willing to confront our neighbor or our relative who has stopped going to church? Do we have the courage to speak up when someone we know is openly violating one of the commandments or acting in a manner opposed to the beatitudes? Are we at all concerned when persons we know stop receiving the sacraments or marry outside the Church or fail to provide religious instruction for their children? Do we open our church clubs and study groups to new persons seeking to contribute their time and talents? Do we affirm those around us who are actively working in the vineyard to yield a good harvest?

These are a few of our responsibilities as God's servants.

Today's parable invites us to consider how we might become better servants of the Lord.

And lastly, how do we react in the face of rejection? The servants in the parable were beaten, stoned or even killed. Are we willing to pursue the Master's will and work for justice in spite of severe rejection? Like these servants we are often sent to call others to accountability for the harvest.

As God's people entrusted with responsibility for the Kingdom we are both tenant and servant. May we renew our dedication to work more closely together in order that our effort this year will yield a record harvest.

*Adopted from 'Catholic Exponent'.*

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 5:1-7

Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43

October 5, 2014

# 靈 修 生 活

## 當 常 懷 感 恩 之 心

呂 漁 亭 神 父

這則比喻的直接對象又是反對耶穌的猶太人。早在公元前七四零年，依撒意亞先知已明言猶太民族是天主的葡萄園，天主原希望它能結甜美的好葡萄，可惜它反倒結了許多苦澀的野葡萄，因此祂只好拆掉保護葡萄的籬笆，讓人及野獸隨意去殘踏吞噬！

我們應該知道，耶穌時代的巴勒斯坦鄉間治安不良，迫得許多園主只好長期居留城內，只有葡萄成熟時，他們才派人到鄉下去收租稅，可惜這些僕人都被無情的園戶一一殺死，最後甚至連園主的親生兒也遭到滅頂之禍。這些僕人象徵歷代派去的先知，親生子則無疑指耶穌自己。那些無情無義的佃戶，其最後結局很慘：「祂毫不留情地消滅了那些惡人，把葡萄園另租給按時繳納出產的佃戶。」

我們是否也屬於這類無情義的佃戶？正如比喻中的那些佃戶，我們也必須靠葡萄園內工作才能生活。說句坦誠的真心話，我們的生存條件比他們更差。他們依賴園主的可能只是一些工作機會，而我們連生命都操在天父手中。不是嗎？在天主造我之前，在這個世界上我連影子也沒有。天父的慈愛雖讓我出生，但我還必須日夜仰慕主的養生大恩，才能繼續生存下去。至於我現在所擁有的一點點聰明、健康、財富或技巧等等，請問那一椿不是天主所賜！

可惜當天主要求我們一點點知恩報愛時，我們卻往往置之不理，甚至濫用祂的恩賜當作犯罪的工具，請問我們比那些佃戶更好嗎？

大家都知道，現代家庭已面臨崩潰的局面，而崩潰的元兇應該是許多家庭已不識知恩惜福為何物！當丈夫辛苦了一天，拖著疲勞的腳步回家時，有幾位妻子還能說聲：「真辛苦你了，快快坐下來休息一會兒吧！」可能不但不叫他休息，甚至還在那裡怨天尤人，說錢不如人家多、房子不像鄰居大！或太太在家整天忙得團團轉，先生回家是否也能說句：「太太，妳太辛苦了，這個家沒有妳如何生存下去！」記得年幼時，我常與爸同床睡，每當父親解衣就寢時，媽一定提著一壺熱酒及一碟點心進來。每當爸半杯黃湯下肚，我常聽他對媽說：「沒有妳，這個家那有今天！」言者無意聽者有心，媽聽了之後，怎不叫她今後為這個家做牛做馬在所不惜。

其實知恩報愛並不難，你只要不把對方所作所為視作理所當然就好了，因為你一旦視為理所當然，一切恩典均將不翼而飛。讓我們立志多多感謝父母，丈夫及妻兒們吧！因為他們及她們為我們所做的事實在太多了。當然在一切之上，尤其當珍惜天父生我養我的大恩！

摘自「公教報」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 十 月 五 日

依 5:1-7; 斐 4:6-9; 瑪 21:33-43