

27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [A]

October 5th, 2008

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: ISAIAH 5:1-7

What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

PSALM 80

O Lord, God of hosts, restore us; if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.

2ND READING: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

Dismiss all anxiety from your minds.

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 21:33-43

Did you ever read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord this was done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.'

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One of our Sunday school teachers was discussing the Ten

Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the

Commandment to "Honor thy father and thy mother," she asked, "Is there a Commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

This is "Right to Life" Sunday and we believe that we share the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the foundation to our United States of America. This week we added \$777 billion to our national debt. When we add all the budget deficits and the \$700 billion plus from the war in Iraq, our national debt is staggering. The interest alone is crippling. The Bible tells us, "The borrower is the slave of the lender." There goes life, there goes liberty and if any of us ever found ourselves overextended, we know there goes happiness. But how do you sober up a consumer society drunk on denial and debt?

Let me set up the situation that existed in Jesus time. Remember parables are always stories with a memorable twist. Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and elders of the people; these are the men who will soon have him arrested and send him to Pilate to be tortured and crucified. Most of the vineyards and farms were owned by absentee landlords living in Jerusalem, Damascus or Rome, interested only in collecting rent to support their lifestyles in the great cities. The tenant did all the work. The country was seething with economic unrest. The

working people were discontented and rebellious. Hence they were known to refuse to pay the rent and in some cases attack the owner's agents. The chief priests and elders would have sympathized with the wealthy land owners, their neighbors and friends in the Temple region. I can imagine them in their fancy clothes and religious jewelry nodding approvingly as Jesus told this parable. "Ah, yes," I imagine they thought, "how reassuring this young prophet Jesus is, of course, the landowners are like God and the tenants are thieves and murderers. Yes, God will put those sinners to death."

But, this is Jesus speaking, and the surprise is coming. God is neither the landowner nor the tenants; God is Father to *all* of them. Elsewhere, Jesus reveals His Divine Father as father of the prodigal son *and* the responsible, hard working, but mean elder brother. In our second reading, St. Paul advises us, "Do not be anxious." God loves us without reserve. God forgives without hesitation. God travels this life journey with us; we are never alone without God. We need to always remember that this is the cornerstone of Jesus' message and repeat it to ourselves in the morning and throughout the day especially when we are feeling anxious:

1. God loves me without reservation.
2. God forgives me without hesitation.
3. God is with me; I am not alone.

Religious leaders who separate rich and poor, workers and owners, the righteous and sinners, the unborn and the born, are divisive and are not building the kingdom of God. God's kingdom belongs to those with enough faith to be confident: the peacemakers, the reconcilers, the healers, those who embrace life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the fruit of love of God and neighbor and I believe that's the Good News!