

Integral Faith

"Homily helps and liturgy resources highlighting care for our common home."



Catholic Climate Covenant™
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Homily Helps, Petitions, and Bulletin Notices for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A (8 October 2017)

Homily Helps

† Comment for the day:

The scripture texts today are challenging. They have been used to foster an image of a vengeful God and the gospel has been one of the texts that down through the Christian era has been used to justify anti-semitism. So, it is important for us to realize that the church offers them to us as an opportunity and motivation to reflect on our lives and our world in the twenty-first century.

The vineyard appears throughout the Hebrew Scripture as a metaphor for God's people. This image is seen today in our scripture readings from Isaiah, Psalm 80 and Matthew. Jesus makes use of it in his condemnation of the leaders of the Jewish people who were looking for ways to discredit him and his message. Isaiah portrays the Kingdom of Israel as a vineyard and God as its owner whose efforts to form Israel into a people of righteousness and justice have faltered. Instead of acting justly, the powerful of the land oppressed the poor, who cried aloud for help. Psalm 80 imposes the same charges against Israel and voices hope that its soon to be king will lead the people into renewed obedience to God and to peace.

Jesus' parable about the wretched vineyard tenants presents the same theme as Isaiah and Psalm 80. It is part of his ongoing dispute with the chief priests and the elders, who have forsaken their role as leaders whose duty is to guide their people in the observance of God's law.

The parable portrays Israel's leaders as the vineyards tenant's, given a sacred trust to see that it bears fruit for its owner. Instead they kill what is most precious to him. Matthew, in addition to condemning Israel's leadership, is saying that the destruction of Jerusalem is God's punishment for Israel's failure to heed Jesus and his message. Matthew places this story of the vineyard tenants at a critical juncture in his Gospel. Jesus has just entered Jerusalem in triumph and cleansed the temple. His criticism of the leaders is the last straw, and the next day they begin to plot his death.

What meaning do these texts have for us in the twenty-first century? From where we stand, the vineyard is the Reign of God ushered in by Jesus Christ. All creation, the whole web of life, is the part of creation that God has given to us to tend. We do not have kings who are responsible for our behavior. It is our responsibility to live out our faith by caring for our common home. We can live out our faith by caring for the poor who cry out because they are most severely affected by pollution, environmental destruction, and climate change. Indeed, it is worth noting that God did not destroy the vineyard described in the passages from Isaiah or in Psalm 80; the neglect of the community led to its ruin.

The biblical communities were burdened by corrupt leadership which they were powerless to change. We have a chance at influencing our leaders by the way we vote, protest, participate in civil society, and take part in the political process. We also make choices in what we buy and how we live our lives, and these choices can promote the well-being of God's wonderful creation. Of course, if our choices are countercultural, we will encounter criticism and opposition, but in standing up for what is right we have Jesus as our model. And in the end we will bear fruit for God, our fellow humans and our common home.

This resource is provided by Catholic Climate Covenant in collaboration with the Integral Faith Team, a group of male and female religious, priests, and lay people dedicated to serving the Church.

Homily Helps (cont.)

† Scripture passages to note:

Isaiah 5: Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes.

Philippians 4: Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Matthew 21: Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

† Passages from *Laudato Si'* to note:

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. (#13)

A politics concerned with immediate results, supported by consumerist sectors of the population, is driven to produce short-term growth. In response to electoral interests, governments are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment. The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments... True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. (#178)

Let us keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power. (#196)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: That all people, especially the poor, might have the chance to join earth's abundant feast, and that we find ways to care for the earth which provides it, let us pray to the Lord....

Option 2: That citizens of this country hold our leaders to account for creating policies that protect the earth and foster life, let us pray to the Lord....

Further Resources

Feedback: IntegralFaithForLife@gmail.com

Webpage: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/english-homily-help

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