

Rectoría San Juan de Dios  
XXVII Sunday of Ordinary Time-Cycle A  
Is 5, 1-7; Ps 80; Phil 4, 6-9; Mt 21, 33-43  
Fr Dante Gabriel Jiménez Muñoz Ledo

## We Are Tenants and Not Owners

The parable of the murderous tenants is a profound call to answer to God for our life and for the life of others.

To better understand this, we must identify the characters in the parable: the proprietor is God; the tenants are the leaders of the people, and also each one of us according to the level our leadership in the family, the workplace, or the community—those for whom we must answer to God; the vineyard is the people of Israel and all whom God has chosen as His sons; the fruit is the love of neighbor, justice, and the rights of the human person.

At the center of this episode is Christ's demand for "*love of neighbor*." The focus is the human person as an absolute value. If God loves men so much and permits us to have them as a vineyard, why don't we love others as God loves them? Why do we not bring them to fulfillment, to full development, yielding the fruit of the communication of love?

Which persons has God leased to me? Which persons are my vineyard? They could be my children even though I understand that my children are not mine; or my parents and siblings, the friends who are part of my life, and finally whomever God has put in my path, especially those in most need; for all these, who are from God, who are His vineyard, God wants mature development in the experience of love. He wants them to experience the love of those who care for them, His own love.

How important it is that we who believe deeply in the plan of Christ understand how it was with Jesus at the time of giving this teaching to His disciples! He was sad thinking about humanity weakened and maltreated, an object of oppression, without justice, without rights, and without love.

Today the same scene is repeated and Christ again watches it with close attention: a world where the leaders have become debased and have usurped the place of the proprietor. In order to turn themselves into owners, they have refused to hand over the fruits and have murdered the servants and the heir.

We want to bring forth the fruit of the particular persons that God has entrusted to our care. We want to act in concert with the intention of the proprietor, to collaborate with Him, so that His vineyard gives true fruit. We don't want to act like owners who dominate and kill.

Can we remember if at any time in our life we have behaved like owners? And have found that we are owners of nothing, not of our own vineyard, and less so of others'?

We want to occupy our place as tenants or administrators of all that we have received, but how can we motivate ourselves to be true tenants and not proprietors?

The Spirit of God enlightens each person, but the Word of this Sunday gives us the opportunity to look carefully at these three ideas:

### 1-Let us be aware of the proprietor's love.

In the beautiful canticle of Isaiah, we encounter a unique awareness of the love of God for the human person. His profound desire is that we produce fruit. The solicitude of God for each one of us is true poetry. What more could He do for humanity? He asks that we be judges of this.

If we remember the love that God has placed in each person from the beginning of life and in the history of each one who is part of our vineyard and if we remember the experience of God's love, we will remain as tenants without aspirations to be dominating owners.

The image of a woman who takes her child to daycare every day can help us to understand the love of God for the persons that God has entrusted to us. Each day this woman, upon returning to pick up her child, begins to discover that her little one is sad, shy, and hungry and then she discovers that he has been mistreated, that he is full of bruises. The big question for her is: Can't those caregivers at the nursery have feelings of love like the heart of a mother? Couldn't they at least discover that the child I entrust to them is more valuable to me than myself? That each morning when I drop him off, I have just bathed him, got him ready, and fed him with all of my love so that all will be well? Can't they even make my child feel at home and transmit to him a minimum of my love?

I see this as the way that God entrusts persons to us, following the canticle of Isaiah. This is the way he has mutually entrusted us with our children, our parents and siblings, our friends, and those whom providence has wanted to put in our path.

## 2- Let us be grateful.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul is not calling us to discover the wealth that we have received in order to develop the fullness of love. The hedge, the wine press, and the tower that the proprietor in the parable put in his vineyard were sufficient riches to do the work of producing fruits.

Here, in Paul, those riches by which our vineyard produces fruits are the true, the honorable, the just and the pure, all that is lovely and gracious.

To be good tenants, we must be grateful that the proprietor will fill us with the riches in the family he has given us and in the persons he has brought into our lives; it is through these persons, no matter how small or poor they may seem, that God loves us.

Can we remember now the moment in our life in which we realized that God loved us very much?

### 3-Let us answer to God for others.

What the owner of the parable demands initially when requesting the fruits, is not the person who makes up the vineyard, but the fruits of that person who has been entrusted to us. To answer for those God has given us doesn't mean to produce fruits in their place, but to assure ourselves that they have experienced God's love through us and, from that experience, that they can produce the fruit of "*the love of neighbor.*"

The proprietor asks for fruit. It would be good if today we were to ask ourselves if already there is fruit and if already the proprietor has asked us for it.

At this stage of our life, has God already required fruits of us? Following the parable, has he already asked us the first time and have we maltreated those He has sent, or even the second time?

Jesus ends by asking: *What will the owner of the vineyard do with those workers?* And those present respond: "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death," that is, those who do not have the capacity to love either God or others. Have we been so cruel and heartless? It is good to be tenants and not owners!