

HOMILY ~ 27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

OCTOBER 7/8, 2023

In the Readings today, we hear two stories about vineyards. In both Readings, the tenants were given everything they needed to produce a bountiful harvest of grapes. In the First Reading, the people did not care for the vineyard; and it produced only wild grapes. God gives each one of us a vineyard when we are born. It is called your life. God has given each one of us a set of skills, abilities, charisms; and we need to care for them and develop them. That is what God expects from us, and he will help us do that if we allow him.

For those of you who are in school, learn as much as you can. Find what you like and what you are good at and focus upon that. Do not be discouraged by what you are not good at, we all have those areas. If you are starting a new job, learn as much as possible. When I started my first professional job with the State of Michigan, I volunteered to do everything. That takes courage. Some of the things I liked and was good at, and some of them, not so much. I surprised myself at times when I volunteered to do something I did not think I would like or be good at, and I was wrong. I learned a great deal, and I made adjustments in my vocation based upon what I learned.

Developing our gifts, abilities or charisms is a lifelong process. I have always loved music, but I never saw it as a charism until I was ordained. Now I can use it in homilies, worship services and concerts. I am always self-conscious when I sing because I do not like to be the center of attention, but I do it anyway.

I have a friend who ran a roofing business all of his life. When he retired, he took an oil painting class and learned how to do stained glass. He went from roofer to being an accomplished artist in retirement. He always had that ability, but he never developed it until later in life. So all of you out there, you are never done. You always have more work to do.

In the Gospel Reading, the tenants took good care of the vineyard, and it produced good grapes; but they refused to share the bounty of their harvest. They hoarded it for themselves and turned to violence and bloodshed instead. Once you have developed the skills, talents and charisms, you have to figure out

how you can share them with others. That can be difficult in our culture that is so focused upon accumulating individual wealth, power and recognition. We can easily get caught up in what is in it for me; what am I going to get out of it; what are my rights; how do I get credit for it?

Actually, if you are feeling down or depressed or anxious or feel that your life isn't fulfilling, the best way to turn that around is to do something for someone else. We hear all of this stuff about self-care to make you feel better, and I guess that is ok. You can get the massage or get your nails done, whatever, but the best way to feel better is to do something for someone else. I am not making this up; it is based upon evidence-based research. Scientists have discovered that doing something for someone else releases three hormones in the brain that are critical for a human being to flourish: serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. So as it turns out, doing something for someone else may be the best thing you can do for yourself.

The best way to develop this skill is by performing acts of kindness. It feels so good to perform an act of kindness that we will be more likely to perform acts of kindness in the future. When we receive acts of kindness, we are more likely to want to pay it forward. This is how we can make the world a better place. Everyone has hundreds of opportunities to do things for others; every day, we just have to be purposeful about it. We have many opportunities here at Church. Volunteer for one of our ministries or do one of our service projects. Invite someone sitting by themselves at the spaghetti dinner to join your table. Young people, do one of your brother's or sister's chores for them. All of us can do something for a neighbor, shovel their snow or rake their leaves. It does not have to be something huge. Give someone a compliment. Be respectful. Thank someone. How many times have you appreciated something that someone has done but fail to thank them? There are many missed opportunities. If we took more of these opportunities, our world would be a better place.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim