



# ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist  
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

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**WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 8 OCTOBER 2023**

**TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A**

**BEING THE GOOD NEWS ... BY PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY**



**Readings this week: Is 5:1 – 7; Ps 79; Phil 4:6 – 9; Mt 21:33 - 43.**

## **Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter**

This week's gospel must be read in conjunction with the first reading (Isaiah 5:1-7) and the responsorial psalm, because the message of these passages is implicit in the parable told by Jesus. As soon as Jesus began to describe the vineyard – fenced around, a winepress dug and tower built – his audience would have immediately known that he was reflecting the Isaiah description of Israel as the vineyard of the Lord. Isaiah's condemnation of Israel in that passage is so strong that one can almost imagine Jesus' audience cringing in anticipation of where this story was leading. The imagery Jesus used would have been so familiar to his audience that it was almost mundane, and yet Jesus, as usual, gives the image a twist. He describes a vineyard owner whose tenant farmers rebel, beat and murder his servants. Any one of these acts was punishable by death and the audience may well have expected the story to end there. And yet the landowner sends further messengers – hopeful of a change of heart from the tenants and allowing them the opportunity to do what is right. After these messengers are also murdered, the landowner sends his own son to collect the harvest from the tenants. Jesus, of course, is drawing on the familiar image of Israel as the vineyard of the Lord. God, the landowner, has entrusted this beautifully prepared land to the people of Israel and yet they have taken ownership for themselves and forgotten their Lord. Messengers, in the form of prophets, have been sent to call the people back to God but they were ignored and even murdered. Now, the Son has been sent to the people and received much the same response. When Jesus asks his audience of chief priests and elders what the landowner should do, they are acutely aware that he is asking them how God should deal with them.

**Scriptural context – Fulfilling prophecy:** Matthew's whole recount of this parable is dependent upon the reader/listener's familiarity with earlier writings within the Old Testament. We are fortunate that the designers of the lectionary have included the relevant passages as the first reading and psalm for this Sunday's readings. The original audience would have drawn on their own familiarity with the texts and recognised Jesus' words as echoing those of Isaiah and the psalmist. Matthew's gospel was particularly keen to cast Jesus in the image of fulfilling the prophecies of the Jewish tradition. Throughout Matthew's gospel we see the author placing the words of prophecy in Jesus' mouth or using the narration to confirm that Jesus performed actions to fulfil the words of the prophets.

**Have you thought? The benevolent landowner:** One of the images from this gospel that would have been puzzling to the audience, and may have tipped them off that Jesus was telling a parable with a particular message, is the image of the landowner being incredibly benevolent and tolerant of his rebellious tenants. Jesus' audience would have known that the law was always on the side of a landowner over his tenants. Any misdeed by a tenant farmer would have been dealt with swiftly and severely and yet the landowner in Jesus' story (God) is almost unbelievably patient and prepared to give the tenants every opportunity to do the right thing.

**Living the Gospel: Different View – Using scripture to justify hatred.** This text is one that has been used by some Christians to justify their hatred and persecution of Jews. They point to the parable Jesus told as evidence that Jesus blamed the Jewish people for his death. It is a strange fact that some people believe that the only way to justify their own beliefs is to try to destroy the beliefs (and believers) of other faiths. For hundreds of years Christians abused and tormented Jews, driving them out of cities and even countries. The terrible treatment of Jews in World War II was drawing on a long history of Christians persecuting Jews.

## BEING THE GOOD NEWS

Whitehorse Deanery  
Eastern Region  
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 9.00am Australian  
Vietnamese – 5.00pm

& SL: @ 8.30am & 10.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month  
@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Weds. Thurs., & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &  
5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed  
for Adoration Wednesday

Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

MACS Catholic Primary School

21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic

Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones Principal

Email: [principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au)

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: Principal

Email: [principal@slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au)

Website: [slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au](mailto:slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au)

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy  
with apostolic virtues, grant,  
through his intercession that, living  
justly and devoutly in this present  
age, we may merit to reach our  
heavenly homeland. Through our  
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who  
lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for  
ever and ever. Amen.

Patron Saint of stomach and  
intestinal disorders.

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to  
reveal in preaching and writing  
God's love for the poor. Moved by  
the heavenly Spirit of Love, you  
detailed the life of Jesus, showing  
His divinity and His genuine  
compassion for all human beings.  
Help those who already glory in  
God's name to persevere in one  
heart and one mind and inspire all  
people that they may hear the Good  
News of Salvation. Amen

Patron Saint of artists, physicians,  
surgeons, students and butchers.

**WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER** this weekend all who are sick, Bryan Jones, Caratha McKerrow, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue, Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died, for the casualties of war in Ukraine, and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Beatrice Patrick, Edwin Manguiat, Aiden O'Reilly, Nell Saunders, Mario Baranello, Enid Curtain, Keith Hilliard, John Sellers and Mary Foley. May they rest in peace.

**LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK:** **Ordinary Time ~ Monday:** St Denis, bishop, martyr and companions, martyrs or St John Leonardi, priest; **Wednesday:** St John XXIII, pope; **Saturday:** St Callistus I, pope, martyr or Mass of the Virgin Mary. **Masses this weekend:** Preface III of The Sundays in Ordinary Time, Eucharistic Prayer I, Eucharistic Acclamation II.

**MONTH OF OCTOBER:** Our Lady of Victory and why October is the month of the Rosary, click [here](#).

**SCHOOL IS NOW BACK FOR ST & SL TERM 4 2023:** Welcome back to all our School Families, both School Staffs and Students. May it be a blessed term for all concerned.

**SL RITE OF BAPTISM** for Sam (Samuel) Mitchell this weekend in our Parish. Congratulations to Alycia – Mum, Tom – Dad and Josh - brother; Sam will become our newest member to God's Family here and our Parish Family of Families too.

**SL PARISH FEAST DAY, SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER:** After our 'straw' vote last weekend we decided that Sunday morning Mass (next weekend) will be at 9.30am followed by Morning Tea in our Parish Hall. If you can assist with setting up and serving please let Sonya know. All are welcome! **ST** Parishioners too are very welcome to join us.

**BREAK OPEN THE WORD:** A copy of this publication is now available for **ALL** Lectors on our Rosters at **ST & SL**. They can be retrieved in person from the Priest Sacristies @ **ST & SL** Churches respectively.

**ST COLUMBARIUM** has now been installed, thanks to Paul Viola a Parishioner at **SL**. Requests for [luncheon](#) can be made at the Parish Office.

**SL 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS** are now available from the Counter in our Church Foyer/Narthex. Your donation towards their cost can be left in the St V de P Poor Box adjacent to where they will be available.

**SL'S P & F AND THE NEXT PARISH FUNDRAISER:** St Luke's Parish Hall is an official voting centre for the upcoming Referendum on Saturday 14th October. The Parish and School have decided to take advantage of this opportunity to do some fundraising and community building by holding a BBQ and Cake Stall for the many visitors we will have that day. Of course, 'many hands make light work' and we would love as many helpers as possible to make it a successful day. If you could help out - be it setting up, cooking, serving or helping with pack up - whatever you can fit in your day - it would be greatly appreciated! Please register your participation [HERE](#). Bags/plates etc are available in our Church Foyer/Narthex.

**SL PARISH HALL** is currently receiving an external cosmetic repainting, thanks to your Parish Stewardship Support. It has been quite a number of years since it was last done. Can anyone remember when?

**MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: The Synod of Bishops begins!** 

**A VOCATION VIEW:** An employer would fire any employee who never does the job properly. God's plan calls us to live our vocation daily in the best way we can.

**STEWARDSHIP CORNER:** "The stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone..." Matthew 21:42 Jesus was rejected by the religious and political leaders of his day, as well as ordinary citizens, but he was still obedient to God, the Father. Similarly, living a stewardship lifestyle may cause you to be "rejected" by others, but we, too are called to be obedient. Saying grace before a meal in a restaurant may attract some strange looks from some. But to others it is a sign that God is alive and well! (**ST:** Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$130; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$175; Vietnamese Donation: \$278.80; **SL:** Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$293.50; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$237).

**WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS** who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

## WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

### MINISTERS OF THE WORD

**SATURDAY** 6:00 PM SL  
6:00 PM ST  
**SUNDAY** 8:30 AM SL  
9:00 AM ST  
10:30 AM SL  
5.00PM ST

### 7 AND 8 OCTOBER

Janice D Souza  
Kelvin Chen  
Lucy Ferris  
Joelle Rousetty & Martin Harris  
Genevieve Hemsley  
Thu Ngo & Thuan Tran

### 14 AND 15 OCTOBER

Mia Perang  
Caren Garlick  
No Mass  
Trevis Yee & Alfred Lee  
9:30 AM Steve Kilroe-Smith  
Youth Group

### EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

**SATURDAY** 6:00 PM SL  
6:00 PM ST  
**SUNDAY** 8:30 AM SL  
9:00 AM ST  
10:30 AM SL  
5.00PM ST

### 7 AND 8 OCTOBER

Anne Lobo  
Patrick Kelly  
Ian Holmes  
Chin L Tay  
Val Gardiner  
Hoang Nguyen

### 14 AND 15 OCTOBER

Melina Barcellona  
Susan Chen  
No Mass  
Pat Kawalevski  
9:30 AM Megan McLean  
Youth Group

### SLIDE OPERATORS

**SATURDAY** 6:00 PM SL  
6:00 PM ST  
**SUNDAY** 8:30 AM SL  
9:00 AM ST  
10:30 AM SL  
5.00PM ST

### 7 AND 8 OCTOBER

Choir  
Michelle Chen  
Melina Barcellona  
Lee Min Yee  
Manny Gonzalez  
Toan Tran

### 14 AND 15 OCTOBER

Choir  
Michelle Chen  
Rosemary Donaldson  
Lee Min Yee  
Manny Gonzalez  
Theresa Nguyen

### SL WELCOMERS 7/8 OCT

6:00 PM Edna Lee  
8:30 AM Marie Pekish  
10:30 AM Volunteer  
*HOSPITALITY*  
*THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY*

### SL CHURCH CLEANING

14<sup>th</sup> Oct. – Bernard's Team  
Bernard O'Malley, Joanne Nolan,  
Melina Barcellona &  
Anne Allsopp

### SL CHURCH FLOWERS

7<sup>th</sup> Oct – Nikhita Paul  
14<sup>th</sup> Oct – Kate Skowronska  
ST CHURCH FLOWERS  
Parishioners

### ST CHURCH CLEANING

21<sup>st</sup> Oct @ 10am  
Hoang Nguyen, Anico Yee  
& Dzong Vu

### ST COUNTERS

This week Team 7:  
Barry & Christine Silvester  
Next week Team 8:  
Fela Colasanti & Chin L Tay



## **WHAT ARE THE POPE'S INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER? For the Synod:**

[Oct. 4 – 29 in the Vatican](#) We pray for the Church, that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a lifestyle at every

level, and allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the peripheries of the world.

**ST INTRODUCTION TO THE CATENIANS:** Hubert Lobo, a Parishioner and his colleague(s), wants to present to the Parish an opportunity to know more about the Catenians this weekend.

**ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK:** Bishop Brian Mascord says Jesus is challenging us, the tenants of the new vineyard of the church, to produce the fruits of justice, love, and peace. Mother Hilda on grasping Jesus' essential message that a life of loving, not being loved is when lives change and take on the colour and texture of the life of Jesus. Plus, Robert Falzon from the MenAlive movement on growing good men, and Fr Mike Delaney on participating in a webinar on Spiritual Authority.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES VICTORIA:** Referendum Online Prayer Gathering. To register please click [here](#).

**BRISBANE LITURGY NEWS:** the [Spring 2023 edition](#) of *Liturgy News*.

**HEART OF LIFE** delivers programs for spiritual and pastoral formation through the way of heart. Have a look at what's on for [2024](#) and consider how Heart of Life can help your Parish Life! We offer accredited formation programs, spiritual direction, professional supervision, prayer & spiritual enrichment. We also facilitate and lead reflection days for parishes and groups, personalised according to your need. Contact us: [www.heartoflife.melbourne](http://www.heartoflife.melbourne) or email: [info@heartoflife.melbourne](mailto:info@heartoflife.melbourne)

**MAJELLAN FAMILY MEDIA:** The [greatest commandment and the marginalised](#).

**AUSSIE BREAD TAGS FOR WHEELCHAIRS:** A Parishioner has suggested we collect plastic bread tags. The tags are recycled locally, raising funds to buy [wheelchairs](#) for disadvantaged people, mainly in South Africa. Your contribution can be left in the Recycle Box in our Church foyer/narthex please.

**SAFETY STATEMENT:** We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

*by Promoting God's Hospitality*

## Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,  
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,  
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

**ST:** Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499  
**SL:** Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

### Baptism Preparation

**ST:** Mary Italiano 9412 8499

### Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116  
Andy Tran 0422 382 109

### Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

### Parish Collection Preparers

**ST:** Barry Silvester &  
Michael Kawalevski

### Stewardship Counters

**SL:** Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087  
Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

### Parish Pastoral Council

*As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?*

### Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,  
Darren McLean - 0417 774 504  
Janette Clark - 9877 2292  
Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

### Parish History

**SL:** Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135  
**Whitehorse Deanery** - Fr Gerard

### Finance Committee

Bernard Negline  
Parish Accountant

### SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the  
Parish Office - 9877 2292

### Church Sacristan

**ST:** Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen  
**SL:** Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

### Church Housekeeping

**ST:** Margaret King 9412 8499

### Church Cleaning & Flowers

**SL:** Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

### Church Linen

**SL:** Beryl Kanagalinggam

### Parish Garden Maintenance

**ST:** Des Connors, Leo Watson,  
Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community  
**SL:** Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

### Holy Communion to the housebound - Fr Gerard

**Emmaus College School Advisory Council Parish Rep.:**

**SL:** Bernard O'Malley

### Parish Choirs

**ST:** Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen  
**SL:** Lina & Maria Mafi  
0411 136 043

### Parish & School Fete Committee

**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### School Advisory Council

**ST:** Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188  
**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### School Parents' Association

**ST:** Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188  
**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330  
(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

### Parish Contacts:

**ST:** John McCoy

**SL:** Tony Lobo &  
Steve Kilroe-Smith




**Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon:** Within your will, O Lord, all things are established, and there is none that can resist your will. For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth, and all that is held within the circle of heaven; you are the Lord of all.

**Response to the Psalm:** The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.

**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! I call you friends, says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. Alleluia!

**Eucharistic Acclamation:** When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

**Communion Antiphon:** The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the soul that seeks him.

**PROCLAIM OFFICE:** Grants program for young Catholic 'innovators' now open 

**2023 ADVENT PREPARATION RESOURCES:**

- **The Sign: Daily Advent and Christmas Reflections 2023** - a captivating 80-page book containing spiritually rich, yet accessible, daily reflections from the beginning of Advent (3 December 2023) through to the Baptism of the Lord (8 January 2024). Order [here](#).
- **With Expectant Hearts** is a new 22-day reflection resource that can be used during Advent to help you sit with God and to trust Him to lead you forward. Each day's reflection is inspired by a short text of Scripture from the day's Gospel reading and concludes with a prayer and a thought or two to take away. Each week is introduced with a detailed look at the different parts of the Madonna of a Rose painting by Raphael, focusing on each member of the Holy Family and John the Baptist. Order [here](#).

**SL: 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY WINES FOR OUR PARISH:** Please contact the Parish Office at your convenience. Bottle \$15, 2 Bottles \$25, 6 Bottles \$75, 12 Bottles \$140; (Will mix, red/white).

**SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II** is now available for @ \$15 each.



**God's kingdom will be given to those who do right**

**27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**



**Working for God**

Jesus says that we shall be given God's kingdom if we work hard to do right. How can we be good workers for God?

*I can be a good worker for God by...*

*I can be a good worker for God by...*

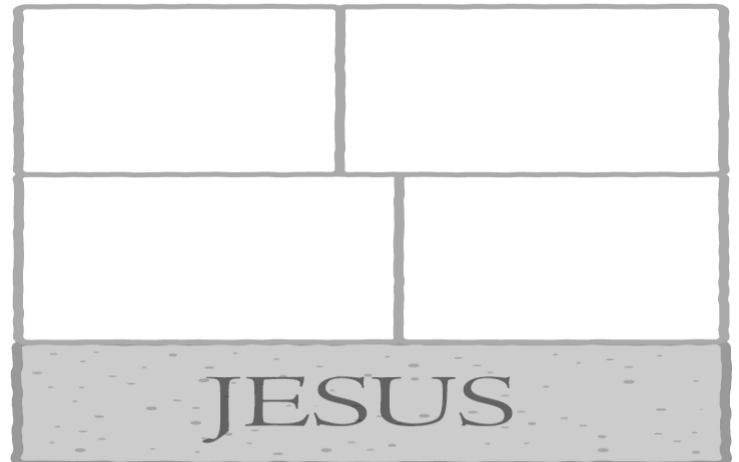
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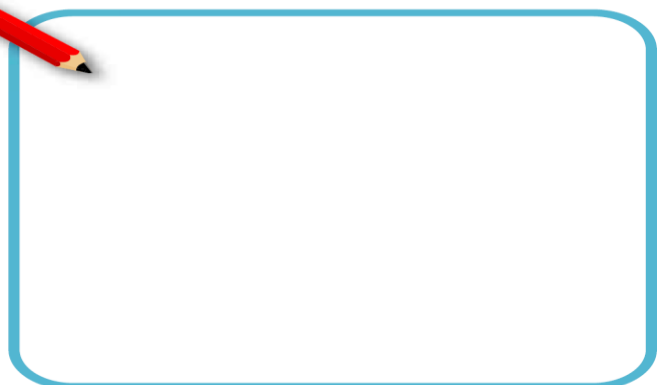
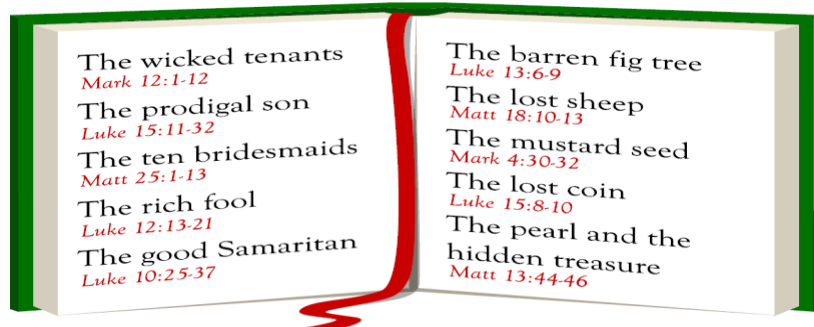


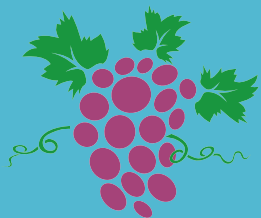
THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS HAS NOW BECOME THE MOST IMPORTANT STONE OF ALL.

With Jesus as the cornerstone of our faith, fill in the other stones with pictures of the people in our world who are rejected and outcast.



Jesus used parables to help explain his teachings to his disciples. Draw a picture from any one of the following parables...





# God's kingdom will be given to those who do right

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A



## Working for God

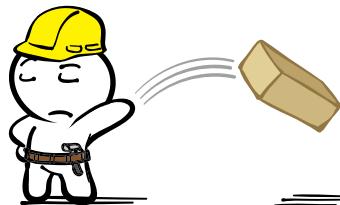
Jesus says that we shall be given God's kingdom if we work hard to do right. How can we be good workers for God?

I can be a good worker for God by...

I can be a good worker for God by...

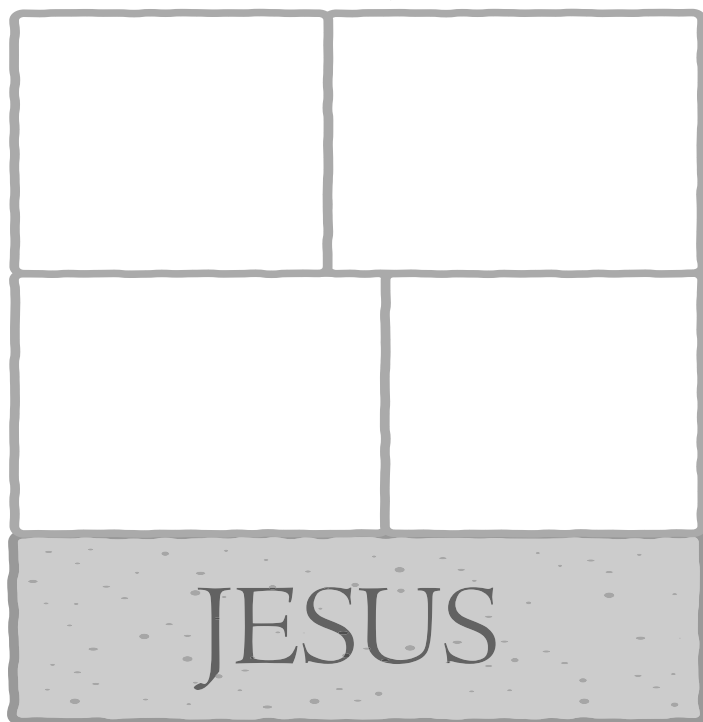
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THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS HAS NOW BECOME THE MOST IMPORTANT STONE OF ALL.

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Jesus used parables to help explain his teachings to his disciples. Draw a picture from any one of the following parables...



The wicked tenants  
*Mark 12:1-12*

The prodigal son  
*Luke 15:11-32*

The ten bridesmaids  
*Matt 25:1-13*

The rich fool  
*Luke 12:13-21*

The good Samaritan  
*Luke 10:25-37*

The barren fig tree  
*Luke 13:6-9*

The lost sheep  
*Matt 18:10-13*

The mustard seed  
*Mark 4:30-32*

The lost coin  
*Luke 15:8-10*

The pearl and the hidden treasure  
*Matt 13:44-46*

# SUNDAY READINGS

## READ AT HOME

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

8 October 2023



### Collect

Almighty ever-living God,  
who in the abundance of your kindness  
surpass the merits and the desires of those who entreat you,  
pour out your mercy upon us  
to pardon what conscience dreads  
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### Readings and Commentaries

As far as homilies are concerned, the psalm is certainly the poor cousin in the liturgy of the word, in fact doubly so. Most of the time the responsorial psalm is composed of a selection of verses from the parent psalm. Only when the original psalm is very short is it prayed in full. Secondly, while it may be prayed devoutly, it is rarely preached on. More's the pity.

The psalms remain living prayers for today in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. They are astonishingly expressive of the whole gamut of human emotion, from the depths of despair to the heights of joyful praise. Trust, sorrow, remorse, pleading, puzzlement, thanksgiving, hoping, anger, vengefulness – all these and more are represented. Some psalms are intensely personal, others are communal, and many a mix of both.

The psalm for today – 117/118 – is one of the most frequently used in the Sunday lectionary and is well cited in the New Testament. It plays a significant role in the early Church's struggle to make sense of a crucified Messiah. It is well worth reading in full, reflecting on at length, and making it a personal prayer.

## A reading from the prophet Isaiah

5:1–7

Let me sing to my friend  
the song of his love for his vineyard.  
My friend has a vineyard on a fertile hillside.  
He dug the soil, cleared it of stones,  
and planted choice vines in it.  
In the middle he built a tower,  
he dug a press there too.  
He expected it to yield grapes,  
but sour grapes were all that it gave.  
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,  
I ask you to judge  
between my vineyard and me.  
What could I have done for my vineyard  
that I have not done?  
I expected it to yield grapes.  
Why did it yield sour grapes instead?  
Very well, I will tell you  
what I am going to do to my vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on,  
and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on.  
I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;  
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.  
I will command the clouds to rain no rain on it.  
Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts  
is the House of Israel,  
and the men of Judah  
that chosen plant.  
He expected justice, but found bloodshed,  
integrity, but only a cry of distress.

## First Reading

It's a challenge for modern readers to grasp the full force of biblical images. Those who have known nothing but huge flocks of sheep spread out over vast pastures, for example, are at a disadvantage when it comes to imagining Christ as a shepherd who knows each sheep by name. Similarly, many vineyards in this land operate on an industrial scale. Isaiah's oracle of the vineyard presumes a small enterprise that the owner has laboured personally to establish. It's a labour of love, and as such offers a widely-used image of God's cultivation of Israel.

The reading begins as a cheerful song but soon turns downbeat; the vineyard into which so much has been invested yields nothing but sour grapes. From that point, the voice is no longer that of the prophet serenading the Lord but that of Israel's God. The song becomes an oracle of judgement on Israel, followed by the passing of sentence. The punishment is severe. The vineyard is laid waste and nothing is left but bloodshed and distress. There's a play on the Hebrew words for justice, bloodshed, integrity and distress in the last verse that's lost in translation.

For all the fearful content of the oracle, it remains a vigorous piece of poetry. The lines are short, the picture they paint is vivid, and there's an energy that drives the action forward to its tragic conclusion. Readers who are mindful of this text's poetic power and proclaim it accordingly will serve the assembly well and prepare them for the gospel parable.

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 79:9, 12–16, 19–20

**R.** The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.  
You brought a vine out of Egypt;  
to plant it you drove out the nations.  
It stretched out its branches to the sea,  
to the Great River it stretched out its shoots. **R.**  
Then why have you broken down its walls?  
It is plucked by all who pass by.  
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,  
devoured by the beasts of the field. **R.**  
God of hosts, turn again, we implore,  
look down from heaven and see.  
Visit this vine and protect it,  
the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**  
And we shall never forsake you again:  
give us life that we may call upon your name.  
God of hosts, bring us back;  
let your face shine on us and we shall be saved. **R.**

## Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 79/80 is a heartfelt plea for God to turn back to the people of Israel, rescue them and restore them. The verses that have been selected for the responsorial psalm are based on the image of the vineyard developed so powerfully by Isaiah. The parent psalm begins, however, by invoking God as shepherd of Israel, so both images are in play.

It's not clear from the way the responsorial psalm has been set out, but there's a recurring refrain in the original: "God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved". Given that this chorus captures the content and feel of the psalm, it is puzzling that the response chosen for the lectionary is a rather flat statement taken not from the psalm but from Isaiah's oracle.

Each of the four verses has its own emotional tone to which readers should be attentive. The first sets the scene by acknowledging God's work in planting Israel in the Promised Land. The second is a cry of anguish lamenting the disaster the people have experienced. The third is an impassioned plea for restoration, and the fourth contains a pledge of renewed fidelity. The more readers do justice to the power of this prayer, the more the assembly's response will come to life.

## **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians 4:6–9**

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.

## **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 21:33–43**

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son," he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

It was the stone rejected by the builders  
that became the keystone.  
This was the Lord's doing  
and it is wonderful to see?

'I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

## **Second Reading**

The remaining two excerpts from Philippians come from the fourth and final chapter of the letter. Some of the material in between last Sunday's reading and this is read at other times in the three-year cycle. It seems a pity the two verses that precede today's text have not been repeated here: "I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near". These words set the scene for the advice Paul proceeds to give.

It is uplifting and wholly positive. Even when the Philippians are in need of something, they are to ask for it "with prayer and thanksgiving". This will bring them the "peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand". They are to flood their minds with all that is noble, good, pure, worthy of love, honourable, virtuous and deserving of praise (terms common in the Stoic tradition). By implication, this wealth of inspiration puts paid to bitterness, jealousy, anger or any other inclination that is destructive. Paul doesn't hesitate to present himself as a model for them to imitate and to claim that as a result "the God of peace will be with you".

It goes without saying that Paul is not a pioneering apostle of the "power of positive thinking". What he is appealing to the Philippians to do is to make the mind of Christ their own, as he did in last Sunday's reading. This is a lovely passage for readers to proclaim. It blends Paul's fond regard for the Philippians with eminently wise teaching.

## **Gospel**

Isaiah's song of the vineyard is clearly a key source for this parable of the wicked tenants. In contrast to the instances where allegorical explanations have been added to a number of Jesus' parables, today's parable has elements of allegory woven into it. The landowner represents God, the vineyard Israel, the tenants Israel's religious leaders, the son is Jesus, and the other tenants are the Gentiles. However, these correspondences don't warrant the identification of every detail of the story with actual persons or events.

In the course of the story-telling Jesus cites a verse from Psalm 117/118. It declares that the Lord has seen fit to make the stone rejected by the builders into the keystone. Whatever its original reference, the early Church saw this text as a useful key to unlock the mystery of Jesus' rejection and vindication. The apostle Peter uses it in his speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:11) and it appears again in the letter attributed to him (1 Pt 2:7).

The gospel story concludes with Jesus throwing down the gauntlet to the religious authorities: "I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit". The battle lines are being drawn. From here the conflict will only intensify, as the next two verses of the gospel make even more clear, until the full significance of the quote from Psalm 117/118 is revealed.



## Concluding Blessing

May the peace of God,  
which surpasses all understanding,  
keep our hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time II, Roman Missal p 715)



# Prayer for the Synod

**As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.

Amen.





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