

27th Sunday OT – Matthew 21:33-43

We continue with Matthew's account of Jesus' teaching in the Temple. He *replied to the attack on his authority* with three parables. We heard the first last week and the second this week. This presupposes knowledge of Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard. Jesus expands the original. The owner sends two sets of servants and finally *his own son* to look for its fruits. They did not even find sour grapes. But met various fates including death.

Just as Isaiah's readers were to recognize themselves in the Son of the Vineyard, so the readers of Matthew were to recognize the history of salvation in the parable. The two sets of servants are the former and later prophets of Israel and the son is Jesus himself.

The parable ends with lessons about Christology and Ecclesiology. It tells us about Jesus. He is the stone who could be rejected and become the cornerstone. It informs us also about the Church, Matthew distinguishes this from the former people of God. In his passion account, these reject Jesus in their cry, "His blood be upon us and our children." Through this, they put themselves in the same situation as the nations to whom the risen Christ sent his Easter mission. They too needed to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus which was to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. In this way the Kingdom of God was to be taken from those who thought they possessed it and given to others. As for the fruits of the kingdom, we have heard elsewhere in this gospel, that words without deeds are unacceptable.

What type of tenant am I?, Sister Yudith Rico asks in her article on today's gospel. Do I live to serve and to take care of others, or do I use them for my own profit and interest? Do I feel responsible and am I conscious of my accountability for all I have received? She continues, As we look around at our world, we see the misuse of the Earth's resources for the profit of a small group, the blood of our brothers and sisters killed by violence and wars. Such things involve us all.

And she should know as a consecrated woman who belongs to the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary. Her academic background as agricultural engineer with a master's degree in education, expertise in spiritual accompaniment, and studies in theology and spirituality has facilitated a diverse ministry life carried out in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon 1995 to 2012. She was the associate executive director of Solidarity with South Sudan,

from 2014 to 2018, and responsible for its international office in Rome. During 2021 she worked in educational development in Port au Prince, Haiti.

She mentions Pope Francis in his denouncement of our avoidance of responsibility and she gives it the name, ***Globalization of Indifference***. We believe that as disciples and followers of Jesus we are responsible for our brothers and sisters. Sister Yudith challenges us with three questions: *Are my actions witnessing that faith? What does the Lord want to tell us with his parable? What will he ask us when our lives here end?*

I have been blessed with many opportunities in my life through the various languages and cultures that have come my way. These challenges helped me to open up and widen my view to the world around me, even at a young age. The fact that I came from a large family was the first challenge to accept everyone who was different from me. By the time I entered all boys high school seminary, our neighborhood back home was becoming integrated. Even though I was not as involved in such a transition that was occurring throughout Dayton, Ohio, and other neighborhoods in cities throughout the country, I was not spared during the summer breaks. I did have the opportunity to participate in racial integration on a more intimate level when I agreed to room with an African-American seminarian from Cleveland, Ohio in our Junior and Senior years. We became life-long friends.

After High School I decided to serve in the Navy at the time of America's involvement with Viet Nam. I was blessed to be sent to Japan where I served at an Airforce Base in Northern part of the country. I took the opportunity to learn the language and immerse myself in the culture, a challenge that countered my father's post war feelings towards the Japanese where he served in the Pacific Theater, but also a challenge to my understanding of God's love for us that included even non-Catholics who practiced a form of ancestor worship similar to our prayers to God through our Communion of Saints.

All this was just a prelude to my eventual involvement as a missionary in Africa, as I ask myself now, how does all this concern me now here at St. Francis de Sales? Simply this, I believe in the God of the present. What concerns me now is simply whoever I meet this day in the present moment is an opportunity to meet God personally in that person I come in contact with, despite the global experience I have already had. What really counts is this very moment, here and now, never to be distracted from or escape from, even for this little moment that I took to introduce you to the here and now.