

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time A

As you noticed the readings from Isaiah and Matthew both contain the image of a vineyard. It is an image that we can appreciate even here in Iowa since we now have our own vineyards, some just a short distance from here.

Vineyards could be found throughout the land of Judah and Israel at the time of the biblical authors and so the average person would have known what the authors were talking about when they described a vineyard. The authors, however, wanted to use the image of a vineyard to describe the Chosen People. It is not a pleasant description.

Take for example the reading from Isaiah. The friend and owner of the vineyard in the reading is God and vineyard itself the Chosen People. God did all he could to make the Chosen People fruitful since he loved them dearly but instead of them producing choice grapes they produced wild grapes, that is, instead of them worshipping the one true God and taking care of the needs of poor they turned to worshipping false Gods and ignoring the poor. It was now time for judgment to take place. We too are God's Chosen People.

Two questions for us: First, what false gods are we worshipping? A false god is anything or any person that comes between us and our relationship with God. Consumerism and individualism along with sex and drugs are often listed as our modern gods here in America. Is it really a healthy thing for us when three-fourths of our economy is based on consumer spending or our primary

focus is on ourselves rather than on the welfare of others? Sex and drugs are just reflections of these "isms."

The second question is, are we ignoring the poor? How we answer the first question will determine how we answer the second one.

The other example of a vineyard is found in the gospel parable from Matthew. The vineyard is again the Chosen People. The owner of the vineyard is God. The tenants are the leaders of the Chosen People. The servants are the prophets sent by God to the leaders. The Son is Jesus. The parable makes it clear that not only did the leaders refuse to listen to the prophets but they even put Jesus to death. As a result God looked for others to produce fruit in the place of these faithless leaders. The judgment here is on the leaders and those who willing follow them.

What kind of leaders do we follow? Are the leaders we follow leading us to God? Do they bring people together or divide them apart? Are they men and women of peace and justice or violence and hatred? Are they advocates of mercy and forgiveness?

Last week I spoke about different images of God found in the bible. One of them that I mentioned was that of a just judge. We encounter that image once again today in the stories about the vineyards. When you are judged by God will there be enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian?

