

The Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A
- 7/8 October 2017 - 74th Anniversary of the Naming of
Our Lady of Victory Parish/Respect Life Month -
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community -
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Isaiah 5:1-7

- "What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?"
- “. . . my friend’s song concerning his vineyard . . . Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes did it bring forth wild grapes? Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! . . . The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!”

(“Use it or lose it!”)

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 80 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Philippians 4:6-9

- "Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you."
- "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, . . . whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you."

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 21:33-43

- "What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" "Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

- ". . . . the same kind of relentless determination should characterize our efforts." ". . . . be on the alert for messengers of the good news - even among those who do not measure up to our idea of a prophet. Jesus didn't measure up either."

- "There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. . . . the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. . . . sent other servants . . . but they treated them in the same way . . . Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' . . . What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes. . . . "He will put . . . to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times. . . . Jesus said . . . "Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'"

i. This is a weekend where there is a great deal to acknowledge, celebrate, observe, remember, recognize . . . and, be challenged by . . .

This weekend, we celebrate, observe and remember the naming of this faith community . . . this Parish . . . placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Victory . . . a late 16th century title for the Blessed Mother which also, around the same time, began to be known as Our Lady of the Rosary . . . the name of this particular Feast as it is known today . . .

Add to this that, throughout this month of October, we celebrate, observe and recognize the continued need to preserve, protect, respect and reverence **all** human life . . . from the moment of conception until natural death . . . even as we are also challenged by the horrific events that took place in Las Vegas this past Sunday . . . 58 deaths caused by an act of violence and over 500 victims who were injured . . . all of which escapes human sensibilities . . .

Yes, this weekend we acknowledge, celebrate, observe, remember, recognize . . . as we do each and every time we gather for the celebration of Eucharist . . . and we are very challenged . . . not simply as to how all of these events are connected . . . but perhaps most of all . . . as to how can such an horrific act of violence be possible?

They are connected **by** God and **in** and **through** God . . . God . . . who chose Mary as the Temple for His Son . . . **our** Savior . . . Mary . . . who's "**Yes**" to God . . . who's "**Yes**" to life . . . is the **perfect** disciple and the model for **our "Yes"** . . . **our** discipleship.

They are connected by God who is the author and creator of **all** life . . .

They are connected by God who gave His only Son so that we might be shown a **new** way . . .

But, we **are** challenged, when we consider the events in Las Vegas . . . and deep down inside, even the strongest of believers ask, "Where was God? Where is God?"

ii. Considering the readings for this weekend . . . in particular, the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the Gospel parable in Matthew that Jesus gives us in . . . we are confronted with **violence!** How could God allow such violence then? How can God allow such violence now?

Perhaps before we can even begin to try to formulate some answer . . . some understanding . . . we need to **acknowledge, celebrate, observe, remember, recognize** . . . **and, be challenged by** the truth that God give us the

freedom to love Him . . . **if** we choose to . . . **We** . . . neither you nor me nor anyone else is **forced** by God to **believe** in God . . . to **love** God, nor any human person. But, **if** we choose to believe . . . **if** we choose to **love** . . . God . . . others . . . then violence ultimately dies, for it cannot be sustained nor find life in **love**. If we **choose** to believe in God . . . to love God in return, we will **never act** or **respond** in violence . . .

If we choose to love God . . . because, God has first loved us . . . **then** we will never end a life before it is born . . . **then** we will work tirelessly to ensure that no human person is hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or homeless, or ill without care **after** they are born and throughout their lives . . . **then** we will understand better that terror and war and prejudice and hate never contribute to human dignity and a better life but rather perpetuate **violence** . . . **then** we will see that, even the seemingly smallest actions . . . of gossip, rumor, judgment of others based on sex, creed, race, sexual orientation, or other arbitrary and artificial measurements give way to the **violence** of division and disunity that ultimately produce hatred and the potential of other violent actions against others . . .

The cycle of violence will **only** be broken when we love God as much as God loves us . . .

iii. As to answering or understanding the questions, “How could God allow such violence then . . . How can God allow it now?” . . . I invite all of us to recall the response of the landowner in the Gospel Parable: **“Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, ‘They will respect my son.’”**

“The Church has always “interpreted this parable as a description of Jesus’ mission, of his death and resurrection. This parable tells us that Jesus came to end the violence of the world not by more violence but by non-violence. Not by striking back but by handing over his life. Not by compounding violence but by absorbing it.” Yes, Jesus came to end the violence of the world by reminding the world . . . then . . . now . . . and always, that: **“God so loved the world, that He sent His only Son” . . . Jesus . . . the flesh and blood manifestation of God’s continued and unbreakable love for each human person. . . . a love each of us and others are called to choose and love in return. . . God’s love . . . a love that can never be diminished, eliminated nor extinguished . . .**

Where was God? . . . Where is God? . . . in this horrific act of violence that took place this past Sunday . . . in the other acts of violence that do not “respect, reverence and protect all human life from the moment of conception until the time of natural death? . . .

God was there this week . . . in the midst of violence . . .
. in the midst of terror . . . God was there this week . . . with
those whose lives were taken . . . with those whose lives
have been injured . . . with those who were first responders
and so many others who acted in unbelievable ways to
protect life . . . save life . . . respect life . . . God was there
this week, and remains with those who suffer . . . continuing
to love whether that love is offered in return or not . . .

“Jesus’ victory over the violence of this world is still
very much in progress, and [God’s love for us is a
reminder that] we are called to assist him in attaining it. . .
. This is why Jesus challenges us not to feed violence but
to starve it. Not to respond in kind [but rather] to reject
every violent word and action. . . . This is not the way of
the world. But it is the way of Jesus. His very cross is a
sign of his non-violent gospel. Today, [perhaps more than
ever], we are challenged to take up that cross and follow
him.”

This is the “**Yes**” Mary offered . . . this is the “**Yes**” of
the disciple . . . this is the “**Yes**” to God and to life.