



Fisch-ing Lines

by Deacon Howard Fischer

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus tells a parable based on Isaiah's "Vineyard Song" from our first reading. Reflecting on this parable, author Alice Camille writes: "Some of us may feel relief that, when Jesus tells the story, the religious leaders are cast in the role of the bad guys. Thank goodness: We don't get the blame this time! If somebody done somebody wrong, it wasn't us. But alas: Who is in charge of the vineyard today if not for us? We are the community charged with the responsibility of the Gospel and the riches of the kingdom of heaven. If the harvest is not being delivered to its rightful owner today, whose fault could it be but yours and mine?"

During this month of October we are reminded that we need to promote respect for the sanctity of human life, starting by protecting life from the moment of conception until we are each called home by God in a natural death. Yet do we consistently and persistently oppose abortion, assisted suicide and capital punishment? Are we dedicated and energetic in fighting those things which attack the dignity of life, such as war, racism, hunger, and the lack of good medical care? In the wake of yet another horrible mass murder in Las Vegas and the on-going carnage on the streets of Chicago and other cities, are we actively engaged in working to change the culture of death in our society? Are we pushing back against the tide of violence through sensible regulation of the weapons that enable so much bloodshed to happen? Perhaps we write off today's prophets by declaring that they are hopelessly naive and idealistic in a world that requires strength and power.

I think that the process of returning the proper harvest of peace and justice to the Owner starts with the recognition that the talents you and I have are a gift from God and that we have an obligation to use them to serve others. Too often we pat ourselves on the back thinking that what we have is simply the result of our own hard work and that we are thus free to do with our talents and their

fruits as we wish. But to the extent that we immerse ourselves in contentment, today's Scripture readings remind us that we need to look in the mirror and ask: When God looks for justice from us, does he find an outcry instead? Are we neglecting the cries of the poor and oppressed? Are we tolerant of violence in its many forms?

There seems to be no limit to the excuses we can offer as to why we don't have the time or energy or wherewithal to return to the Owner the payment to which he is entitled. We have countless ways of shutting off both the message and the messenger that challenge our complacency and self-satisfaction. Yet, Jesus tells us that the conclusion for the treacherous tenants is not a good one.

Alice Camille concludes her reflection on Jesus' parable by noting: "This song ends on a note sad enough to be eligible for the country-western jukebox. The kingdom will be removed from the custody of bad tenants and given to better ones. That's certainly the way the song finishes in Jesus' day. But how will it end in ours?"

There will be a day of reckoning. Fortunately, God always gives us another chance to get it right and return his rightful harvest. Let's seize that chance NOW. If you wish to contact me, please leave a note at the Parish Office or send an email to deaconhwf99@yahoo.com.