

## Homily

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT

October 4, 2020

I like the occasional adult beverage. Wine is often enjoyed as a companion to an elegant dinner or to top off a long day to relax before retiring for the evening. Beer is considered synonymous with sports, whether watching or playing. Kentucky is known world-wide for its bourbon, Germany for its Bierfests and France for its dominance in world class wine making. It was the ancient Greeks who made winemaking an art.

In ancient Greece, wine, whether straight, spiced or mixed with water, was used in religious ceremonies, offered in sacrifices, employed as a medicine and commonly a part of all meals for all members of the family.

In early Christian culture as it is now, wine is a symbol of joy. The stewards at the Wedding at Cana were amazed that the Good Wine was saved until the inferior wine ran out. In Ecclesiastes, the author tells us to, "Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, because it is now that God favors your works." This is a harbinger of the Eucharist we will soon share. Wine is mentioned over 200 times throughout the bible and vineyards are mentioned at least 60 times.

Although there is no proof he actually said this, Benjamin Franklin has been attributed to saying, "Behold the rain which descends from heaven upon our vineyards, and which incorporates itself with the grapes to be changed into wine; a constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy!" Whether he said it or not, the sentiment is true; God wants us to be happy!

God made us in His image; that means we are like Him. Not that we are gods; no, but God is Light and we are a reflection of that light. God is Good and we are a reflection of that good. God is Love and we are a reflection of that love.

God wants us to be happy. He made us and granted us gifts that coincide with our nature. Some of us are teachers; some of us work with our hands; some of us lead others; some of us are artists. He wants us to use the gifts He gave us to be happy.

And just as He gives to us, we are to give to Him and to each other. We offer gifts of bread and wine; likewise, we offer ourselves in the celebration of this Mass. We use our gifts to glorify God and to help and please each other. That is how we are the happiest.

I'm no artist, but I enjoy art. I love museums; I love going to dinner theatre; I love going to gothic churches. Our own Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is beautiful. I am blessed by the work of others from the gifts they received from our heavenly Father. I'm no Brewmeister or winemaker, but I enjoy the beverages those artists make.

I am a husband and father; I am a deacon; I am an engineer. God gave me certain gifts and certain callings; this is what I'm good at and what I enjoy. And others benefit from my sharing of these gifts. What are your gifts? How do you share your God-given gifts with others? With God?

God wants us to be happy and we are the happiest when we use these gifts for Him and for each other.

The first reading describes a fruitless effort; wild grapes good for nothing but to be abandoned. In another translation, the word "rotten" is used instead of "wild." God provides, the earth provides, but the fruit is corrupt. We are given everything we need, but unless we embrace God's gifts, we are "wild" and "rotten."

Often have I wasted a day doing nothing or worse, something that didn't glorify God, something that didn't help myself, my family or my friends? It wasn't because God didn't give me everything I needed. I made a choice.

The Gospel message depicts a similar scene as our first reading, but with a landowner, tenants who leased the land and the landowner's servants.

We know who plays who in this parable; the landowner is God the Father, the servants are the prophets, the son is Jesus.

But who are the tenants? Jesus was talking directly to the chief priests and the elders of the people. He was making a thinly veiled accusation that they were unworthy, selfish, doomed.

What is our takeaway today? Are we the people the vineyard is given to that will produce its fruit? Are we fruitful? Or are we the ones the kingdom will be taken away from.

This is one of those passages where we get to take a long, hard look at ourselves.

Every day we are given the opportunity to produce good fruit. Everyday we are given the chance to be good, to help our neighbor, to apply our gifts, to love one another.

And every day, we encounter struggles, challenges that thwart our efforts. Maybe someone is negative about our work or rejects our attempts. It is then that we have to look to our heavenly Father and remember that He made us good, gives us everything we need and wants us to be happy.

Today, as we approach the Lord of the Universe, as we receive Him Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, let's remember the joy He wants for us.

When we focus on Jesus, the Light of Christ, everything else falls into shadow. It is then that we truly see the joy, the immeasurable love, the infinite mercy God has for us.

Today, take this joy and be Christ for the world.