



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES
Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

Feast of the Holy Rosary Parish Celebrations

October 5, 2008 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

Gospel reading Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner, who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When the vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, 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.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "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 that will produce its fruit."

Brief commentary:

Today's parable speaks about the punishment that will be given to the religious and political leaders of Israel. The text is highly allegoric. For example: The owner of the vineyard clearly represents God, while the vineyard (cf. Isaiah 5:7) and the tower (cf. Isaiah 5:1-2) stand for "the house of Israel." According to Matthew, the servants represent the prophets sent by God to Israel. The produce is the good works demanded by the Covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people. The "son" represents Jesus, to whose murder the vineyard owner responds by killing the tenants and leasing it to "other tenants." Those other tenants have been taken to mean the largely Gentile Church and the believing Jews. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23 which was used in the early church as a prophecy of his resurrection.

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- God is the owner of the vineyard who leased his property to the religious and political leaders of Israel. They not only rejected the prophets but killed the Son.
- Matthew's community found in this parable an explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D.
- The early church also found in this parable a justification to their claim to be the true people of God.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. God has called me to produce good fruits in his vineyard. In the aftermath of the recent storms and hurricanes, how faithfully am I using my gifts to help others?
2. Jesus said that whatever we do to the least of his brothers and sisters we do it to him (cf. Mt 25:40). How is our society treating our suffering brothers and sisters in Haiti, Cuba, and the rest of the Caribbean?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 443; 755-756; 781-782.