

TWENTY SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (10/4-5/2008)

Isaiah 5/1-7, Psalm 80, Philippians 4/6-9, Matthew 21/33-43

The bishops have requested that we observe this Sunday as Respect Life Sunday. We don't confine our observance to one weekend of course, and we don't confine our respect for life to one issue alone, as important as it is.

Our opposition to abortion must be joined with sincere efforts to work for peace, avoid violence, promote justice, protect and serve the marginalized – young and old – in our society, a whole host of actions that define the Kingdom, God's presence in our lives.

During the present political campaign, we should be on the watch for candidates who respect life in *all* its phases and who promise to do what they can to further a *full culture of life*.

We know that politicians of all parties traditionally promise great things in the campaigns.

Let us vote for those whom we hope will convert their rhetoric into effective action.

Please understand; this is not an endorsement of any individual candidate or party.

It's primarily a plea for voters to exercise their voting privilege well, with vigilance and with an informed attitude.

Having gotten that off the docket, what about today's parable?

It's another one about the owner of a vineyard and his workers.

This time, anger and resentment flow into violence, kidnapping and murder.

It would make a lurid story on the evening news.

Jesus is a man without illusions; he knows what lurks in the hearts of human beings.

And he is unafraid to face into that sin, always aware that he will encounter the full force of that evil against his own person in Jerusalem.

A vineyard owner gets ready to collect his "rent" from the workers in his fields.

When he sends his agents to collect the money or produce, they are treated with rejection, violence and even death.

Then the owner makes an imprudent decision to send his son, reasoning that the son will carry more weight and be more effective with the tenant workers.

The young man fares worse than the others precisely because he is the son and the heir.

He is seized, dragged outside the vineyard and killed.

When the startled owner learns all this, in his grief, he vows revenge on the workers – and so the violence escalates with more violence.

Not much respect for life in that scenario, is there?

Jesus' parable highlights the Kingdom of God that is not always received with grace and acceptance; in many instances, sin will continue to rule the roost.

But that is what Jesus is all about; he comes in our midst to wean us away from sin and violence.

He will do so, not by hiring mercenaries and armies to carry out his own agenda by force, but by submitting in obedience to His Father's will.

And that will include Jesus' death on a cross.

It's a rough world we live in, and yet the Kingdom is here even in the midst of evil.

That same Kingdom is our one hope.