

## Homily 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year A 2023

Another vineyard story but with a very different purpose. In this story it is God who creates the vineyard and prepares it in such a good way that the tenants only really need to tend it by removing any weeds that appear and gathering in the harvest. Let's think of ourselves as this kind of vineyard. God has brought us into being, filled us with possibility and talents of different kinds, watches over us and helps the good within us grow (the fruit) while weeding out what is harmful whenever we appeal to God. We have been created to bear good fruit. In baptism the Holy Spirit was given to us to help and guide us in this.

Now let's think of the Church as this vineyard created by God through Jesus Christ. Like the vineyard in this story, the Church has been created and given everything it needs to be fruitful. We are also given faithful tenants to help produce a harvest truly acceptable to God. This year our lead tenant, Pope Francis, has called a meeting in Rome of many leading tenants of this precious vineyard to reflect on how well they are responding to the production of a rich harvest. There is a recognition that the Church needs to be more synodal involving all the pilgrims on the journey we share including those not well represented in the decisions made and in the way the family celebrates and lives its life.

One of the challenges concerns those who feel unable to join the faithful often because they feel excluded just like the son of the vineyard owner who, for us, is the figure of Jesus Christ who was rejected and sentenced to death. He was utterly and brutally excluded. But Jesus also makes clear that the Church is built on the excluded; they are the keystone just as Jesus is.

Just before the Synod began, Pope Francis issued another encyclical on the environment *Laudate Deum*, on the feast of St Francis of Assisi. Bishop John Arnold, Salford, writes *that we should praise God for all His creatures and that our care for our common home is intimately connected with our care for each other. As Pope Francis explains, the decisions we make can have grave consequences, not only for those who are still living, but the generations to follow. We have a duty to take action to look after our planet. 'What is being asked of us is nothing other than a certain responsibility for the legacy we will leave behind, once we pass from this world.'* (*Laudate Deum 18*)"

Pope Francis adds:

I have realised that our responses have not been adequate to help stop climate change, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point. He reminds us that we are responsible for caring for God's creation and doing what we can to protect the planet. He **encourages a change in lifestyles**, pointing out that emissions per individual in the United States are two times greater than those in China. He criticises climate-change deniers and sceptics and says the climate crisis does not interest "the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the shortest amount of time". The Pope is calling **for more decisive co-ordinated action** between governments and for international agreements on protecting the environment to be implemented. Francis says that COP28 in Dubai later this year needs to begin a "new process marked by three requirements: that it be drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all.