



## **FATHER ANTON'S WORDS OF WISDOM;**

This Sunday Jesus teaches once again through storytelling... using the parable of the landowner who plants a vineyard, and leases it out to tenant farmers until vintage time. To understand this parable we have to be able to identify the characters He is talking about. The landowner is God, the vineyard is the is humanity, the tenants you and I, and of course the son is Jesus. We all know that and the end of our days we will be asked to give an account of our lives. How did we apply the Good News of the Gospels as taught by Jesus? Did our lives bear fruit? Have we given to God a return on our many blessings? The art of going a vineyard is not an easy one. The vines require a lot of attention and must be watered. The vineyard needs to be protected from insects and weeds Once the grapes are ready they need to be harvested at just the right time. God has entrusted us with the care of our earth and of each other. Sending Jesus into the world in human form, sharing our human nature and experiencing

the life of everyday people, He revealed to us His genuine love... that He cared for His children and wanted to understand their lives on this earthly journey. In the person of Jesus, He reveals His love and He challenges the religious leaders of the day. He reminded the people that He was more interested in their hearts rather than in the letter of the law. Jesus interacted with ordinary people and spent time with those who were considered the lowest of the low. Beggars, lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, Samaritans and even the Romans.... all those who were looked down upon by the Temple leaders and the scribes and pharisees... these were were the lives that transformed by our Saviour. He healed and changed lives without asking for anything in return other than that they try to change their lives and love God. Jesus taught that God is compassion and mercy... that He loves us so much that we have until our last breath to accept His love. Today there is a lot of criticism of our Holy Father because he is challenging the Church and her leaders to be agents of God's mercy. He is being called anti-catholic by many of the hierarchy and many priests and people. Pope Francis is doing the same thing our Lord did... he is reaching out to those who are scarred, broken and in many cases whose lives are shattered, and telling them that they are still precious in the eyes of God and worthy of His love. He is reminding them that there is hope, and that there is nothing His love cannot change. God is able to accept us as we are... and He is patient... He allows us the time we need to heal and grow, and yes I believe that for those whose lives are shattered and who cannot raise themselves up because the pain and confusion has taken over; He is able to embrace them and offer mercy in a way that only He can. "Christ is indeed much more merciful than the

Church!” As long we human beings are in charge, even though we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us, we still get it wrong. It is arrogant for me as a priest or anyone who has been called to minister to utter condemnations and judgements of others. Of course we must speak truth, and we must speak out against injustice but it must come from a place of love. I often ask myself if my work in the vineyard is bearing fruit and if I am tending to the vines with loving care. I ask myself if those entrusted to my care are able to experience God’s love and mercy through me. When the Son of the landowner is sent in to collect his share of the harvest, we hear in this story that he is killed. I think that if Jesus came down tomorrow, we would still find it difficult to listen to His message. How would he deal with our material world, the struggle still for civil rights? How would He respond to the crisis in our world today? What would he have to say about the Church? I have no doubt whatsoever that we would be the same as the tenants in today’s parable... we too would kill him. By rejecting the concept of mercy, compassion and love we are rejecting Him. By refusing to listen to those who suffer we are refusing to listen to Him. By being indifferent to the plight of others we are being indifferent to Him. By choosing fear over trust we are denying Him. Indeed Jesus is the foundation of our lives. He is the rock that cannot be moved. God has revealed to us through him the power of love and the gift of faith. God has shown us that trust is necessary for growth and that faith is what offers us hope. Jesus has told us that fear is useless because it paralyzes us - we cannot grow and it stifles faith; which destroys our ability to hope. I hope and pray that at the end of my life people will remember me as one who tried to make a difference, who revealed God’s love through my example and that they know I truly loved those whom I was called to serve. I hope and pray that they will have seen that Jesus was the cornerstone and the foundation of my life. I pray that God will be happy with His share of my harvest through my work in His vineyard... that it has born much fruit.

**LET US PRAY: Lord today’s parable speaks still today and reflects our world. May I be a faithful worker in Your vineyard and happily share it’s harvest. May my efforts yield love, compassion and mercy among Your people that they in turn may work on Your behalf. May pride and self-righteousness never cause others to turn from You, but rather may mercy and compassion be my witness to our broken world. Amen.**