

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



Today's Readings:

Song of a vineyard. Is 5:1-7
Don't worry, ask God. Phil 4:6-9
The rejected one is the keystone. Mt 21:33-43

Next Week:

Come to the wedding
Is 25:6-10; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20;
Mt 22:1-14

In a nutshell

Today's parable refers to the mistreatment of God's prophets, culminating in the death of Jesus himself. Just as the vineyard owner gets on with the harvest by finding new tenants, so too God's plan will find a way forward. The fruits of the kingdom will be enjoyed by all—even the 'least likely'—who are responsive to the gospel.



A forgiving God

I was asked to give some talks on religion to the young men and women in a juvenile detention centre. With considerable uncertainty I made my way through the centre, accompanied by a guard who did his best to reassure me. He introduced me to the students, then left.

For a few minutes I held the attention of the class. Then bedlam took over. I was not without experience in teaching school boys, young adults and even trade unionists. But this hour was without parallel in my teaching career.

When time was up, and before the guard had returned to 'rescue' me, a teenage girl, who was also a single mother, began to read aloud from a pamphlet she had chanced upon in the room. At first I could not believe what I was hearing, given our circumstances. She was reading the Creed! 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins...' The girl paused, looked up at me asking,

'Could God forgive me?' This was a girl who had been found guilty of having brutally murdered a young man. I walked over to her table and answered 'Of course'. Then I followed up with a few words about Jesus' death and resurrection, God's relentless love and our need to be sorry.

By now quite a group had gathered around our table, curious and attentive to this conversation. Said one boy, amazed by what he had just heard and obviously wanting to apply it to himself, 'A bloke kills another bloke... could God forgive him?' On my reassurance that God happily forgave all repentant sinners, and gave them strength to change their ways, the boy made his way out of the group obviously feeling free for the first time in a long while.

In the ensuing silence, the girl asked once more, 'God could forgive me?' On my repeated reassurance she said quietly, 'Wish I knew that before. Gunna ask him to forgive me tonight.' (PK)

Signs of faith

My wife and I visited what is known as 'the Italian chapel' in the Orkney Islands. During World War II Italian prisoners of war were confined to the Orkneys. While there, they contributed to the construction of a massive barrier to prevent U-boats from reaching British shipping. There is now a causeway on top of the barrier connecting the islands. These men received permission to convert a hut into a chapel. The chapel stands today, the ceiling and walls covered with beautiful frescoes. There has been a reunion



church below the rooftops

since when the then prisoners returned to meet with the people in the Orkneys they had come to know. In spite of the war, these signs of faith, community and creativity endure. (Noel)

Ten ways to handle rejection as a Christian

1. Focus on the positive: Plenty of saintly people know rejection. You are in good company!
2. Reflect scripture. Read the Passion... right through to the Resurrection.
3. Resist any temptation to feel 'martyred' or to be self-pitying.
4. Stay focussed on God's love, not the absence of love in others.
5. Shed healing tears. Remember: Jesus wept too.
6. Seek the support of a friend.
7. Draw sustenance from the sacramental life of the Church.
8. Pray for your 'enemies'.
9. Immerse yourself in the lives of the saints. e.g. Read about a saint who shared something of your plight.
10. Toughen up! Pray for courage, endurance, strength.



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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