

27th (SJ) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

When I was a child I viewed Sundays as not only going to church or market day in our town but also for relatives coming to visit our family. One early Sunday morning I asked mom, “*We have visitors bringing a lot of produce, are they relatives? Mom told me, “No they are not; they are our agsador/salaligan from our farm.”* The Hiligaynon word for *tenant* is *salaligan*. From the root word ‘*salig*’ which means *trust*. A tenant is a person who is entrusted with a piece of property—*like a farm*. He is not the owner but has to take good care of the trust given him (*to administer the property*). He has to give an accounting of the stewardship, like an accountant who reports everything down to the last penny. The tenant is grateful and devoted to the person who has trusted him. The owner has faith in the tenant who gives back by being true to the faith with which he was gifted.

This Sunday’s parable is opposite to what tenants are expected to be. Instead of being thankful and honored to have been cared for by their landlord they murdered all his emissaries and they even killed his son. It does not take a great deal of imagination to see ourselves in this parable. The *vineyard is Israel, the vineyard owner is God, the servants are the prophets, the son is Jesus, and the wicked tenants are the Jewish leaders*. Listening to this parable the Jews failed to realize that Jesus was the Son of God and that the story was intended to enable them to see themselves and their actions that would lead them to radical conversion. Instead they remain callous and even planned to kill Jesus. How painful it is to be rejected. Rejection is something we all encounter in life and Jesus was no exception. God sent his Son, which showed his love in every possible way, and in return we have turned our backs and offered him nothing but ingratitude and indifference.

We are mere tenants of this world, our families, and our lives. They are not ours. Each of us have to take responsibility to care for a portion of God's vineyard and when harvest time comes we are expected to produce the fruits. It challenges us to keep working in God's service and not to become complacent. We have to take good care of the things entrusted to us and live with gratitude to God. *Are you reproducing the gifts of God's love by living faithfully, by extending care, sharing and living what you believe?* The Lord will be disappointed when we lazily sit back and fail to appreciate *the beauty of our love, the joy of our families and his loving care.* A day of reckoning will come when we will be accountable for the way in which we have carried out the task God has given us to do. *At the end of your life... do you have something good to offer the Lord?*

Living our true Christian identity is living in consonance to the Gospel values. *Christianity is not a question of what we failed to do, but what we actually do or can do.* We celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion on Sundays. We are fulfilling that purpose of the Eucharist when we transform and transcend the message by our witnessing. That is: *to show our love for God by living His teachings and caring for our neighbors.* St. Paul said, *"If there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you."* Evaluate your own life and determine the areas where you need conversion. *"If you're headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns." Don't give up! Moses was once a basket-case too!*

St. Paul reminds us today, *"We should direct our thoughts to what is true, honorable, good and worthy of praise."* In so doing, we will experience the peace of God amid the trials and anxieties of life. *Are you investing wisely?* Life is not a matter of amassing all the things of the world. *It is not a question of quantity but quality.* Invest in God, in your family, in your good health. *Are you sowing good*

works? Nurture friendships and relationships. Learn not just investing well, but investing rightly. *Live God's love*; it is our greatest investment in life. The love and goodness we impart are treasures worth keeping. Love is the very cornerstone of life itself. Without love all the things you've built all your life will someday just come crumbling down.

All of us are tenants in this world. *"It's only when you share your life to others that life begins to have meaning and purpose."* We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give. Lastly our readings remind us, after doing His part God expects from us *spiritual fruits, not religious nuts*— fruits in the form of good and meaningful lives. We have homework to do. *The Lord has invested his life, his mercy and his love for us. He will ask no less from us. "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."* May we be worthy of the good things that the Lord has done for us. *Amen!*