



TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME- YEAR A

Dear friends,

In 1978, the Khmer Rouge under their leader Pol Pot ruled Cambodia for four years. During that time people were sent from the cities to work in the countryside in the rice fields. Those who wouldn't go, or who couldn't work in the fields were killed. During a four-year reign of terror almost two million people died, being buried in what he become known as the 'killing fields.' The evil of the regime has still menaced the people of Cambodia for many years, as land mines were planted all over the country, which have caused further loss of life and many people have been maimed by the mines. It is always difficult for us to fathom what motivates such violence towards other human beings.

Today in St Matthew's gospel (Matt 21:33-43), Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard which has been let by the vineyard owner to tenants who will work the vineyard while the vineyard owner pursues other interests. We can understand how, the tenants who have worked hard to produce the fruits of the vineyard, might in time, come to consider the vineyard as their own and resent the return of the owner. So when Jesus tells of the owner's servants going to re-claim the vineyard they are harshly dealt with by the tenants. The vineyard owner still hopes that the tenants will relent and so, he sends his son. But the tenants kill the heir to the vineyard, and seize it for themselves. Ultimately, the vineyard owner leases the vineyard to new tenants.

In the Old Testament, the vineyard was a symbol of Israel, who given the promised land by God (the vineyard owner), were called upon to return its produce in the form of: justice, compassion and faithfulness. The prophets (the servants of the vineyard owner), who constantly called Israel to uphold these values and produce its fruit, were killed and thrown out of the vineyard. Eventually, God sends His Son Jesus (the heir) in the parable, and

there is no respect for him, and He, like the prophets before Him, is crucified and killed.

As Jesus begins this parable by addressing it to the chief-priests and the religious leaders of Israel, He is really apportioning blame to the leadership of the people of Israel who rejected God's prophets through the ages, and even now reject God's Son. This should not be seen as an anti-Semitic bias against the Jews, but rather it addresses the failures of leadership to heed God's call and produce appropriate fruit in concern the poor and the outcast of Israel.

How does this parable apply to us today? We, the Church, the People of God, are called upon to produce the fruit of the vineyard which God has entrusted to us, recognising that Christ, although rejected by the religious leaders, becomes as the gospel concludes, the cornerstone, on which the Church is founded.

We, as Church, must always recognise that the vineyard, the Kingdom of God on which Jesus is the cornerstone, holds all things together, and acknowledge Him as the One to whom all fruits and gifts ultimately belong. Otherwise, we become like the bad tenants in the parable, who, simply labour out of our own sense of greed and self-importance, while failing to see the real power of love and justice as the fruits of God's Kingdom.

The 'killing-fields' of Cambodia are always a sign to us that violence and murder of other human beings, are the construction of deranged minds believing that they can somehow erect a building founded upon crumbling foundations.

Only God, can provide a Kingdom which lasts forever. As His people, we are gathered together to form a community who through their love for one another are the living stones founded on faith in Christ, our hear and cornerstone.

[Fr Kelvin](#)