

## **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **Matthew 21:33-43**

A few days ago, the nation was stricken with another tragedy; another mass shooting, this time in Las Vegas. Many of us are still grieving over this massacre. As you already know, over 50 innocent people were killed and more than 500 people were injured in this slaughter. It was indeed an evil act. Violence is an evil thing, and the face of evil certainly reared its ugly head through the shooter's act of violence. Long before this incident, many of us have probably asked God at one point or another in our lives, "Why do you allow these things to happen?" "Why do you not stop the violence that makes so many people suffer?" When we look back at human history, the evil one has always threatened human dignity and hope with and through violence.

In one of his homilies, St. John Paul II once warned that, "Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity." This is so true. Violence even brought our Lord, the second person of Triune God, to His death on the cross. In the parable we heard in the Gospel, a

landowner sent his son to his vineyard to collect the produce from it. But the tenants seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Here, Jesus was not simply talking about a vineyard, he was foreshadowing the violence that He would encounter during His Passion. In and through His Passion, violence certainly revealed its malicious nature. The brutality and reality of crucifixion seemed to announce the victory of the power of evil to those who did not believe in Jesus' resurrection.

However, we all know that violence did not and ultimately could not defeat God, the Almighty Father. He had the final victory, the last laugh, over the power of evil through and in Christ's resurrection. God triumphed over the power of violence, and this is exactly how He works in the midst of darkness. Our God who is Love always conquers evil and brings good out of it. All we need to do is look at Jesus' death and resurrection as the most tangible sign of His love and power. This is the reason *why* we hope and stand strong in the face of tragic events, especially those caused by violence.

In today's second reading, St. Paul exhorts the Christian community in Philippi not to have anxiety whatsoever, but encourages them to continue

praying and petitioning God. Then he wrote, "The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ." God, through Jesus, promised and continues to promise us His peace, a peace that goes far beyond our understanding. Although the evil one always attempts to bring us to the point of despair and hopelessness, we must keep praying for each other and maintain hope in our hearts. Through prayer, we can be united as one and share God's peace with each other.

Pope Benedict XVI once said, "There is too much violence, too much injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness. This "more" comes from God: it is his mercy which was made flesh in Jesus and which alone can "tip the balance" of the world from evil to good, starting with that small and decisive "world" which is the human heart."

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, may we fill our hearts with love of God *and* love of neighbor, and continue to stand against all violence and

injustice which contradict the principal truths of our faith and the truth of our humanity. May we unite ourselves in prayer and support all victims of violence, especially the victims of Las Vegas shooting.

Rooted in firm belief and hope in Christ's victory over the power of evil, violence, and death, let us continue to proclaim Jesus' love, hope, and peace by our words and actions. Let us not allow violence to rob us of the precious hope we carry forth in our hearts.