

Homily Helps:

Respect Life Sunday



October 4, 2026: Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Lectionary: 139A)

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

Second Reading: Philippians 4:6-9

Gospel Acclamation: cf. John 15:16

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

- The First Reading from Isaiah describes how the vineyard owner (God) cared for his vineyard (Israel), doing everything he could to help it grow and flourish in his love: *My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; / he spaded it, cleared it of stones, / and planted the choicest vines.* The people symbolized by God's vineyard are his *cherished plant*. But despite this loving care, the vineyard only produces *wild grapes* (sin).
- October is Respect Life Month, and today (October 4) is Respect Life Sunday. Each year at this time, the bishops of the United States call us to pause and reflect more deeply on the sacred gift of human life and our role in welcoming, cherishing, and protecting the lives of our brothers and sisters.
- Like the owner who took such great care in the creation and cultivation of his vineyard, God loved each of us into existence and continues caring for us, inviting us ever deeper into his

friendship. We draw closer to him when we follow his example and love one another as he loves us, even amidst difficulties or inconveniences.

- But, all too often, we fail to treat one another according to the dignity with which he made us. When we don't follow God, and instead turn away from him, we produce the *wild grapes* of sin.
- In the face of our own suffering or that of others, we may be tempted to doubt the innate goodness of human life or even believe that some lives aren't worth living. Abortion and assisted suicide then emerge as false "solutions" to challenging circumstances.

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

- As the Psalmist reminds Israel of its need for salvation and repentance, we are reminded that we belong to God, and that mercy and healing is always possible. In our world today, we see countless examples of complete disregard for human life. From the child hidden in its mother's womb, to the terminally ill patient nearing the end of life, every person is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves respect and protection.
- The Psalmist recalls God's tender love and care: *A vine from Egypt you transplanted; / you drove away the nations and planted it.* The Psalmist seeks God's protection: *Once again, O LORD of*

hosts, / look down from heaven, and see; / take care of this vine, / and protect what your right hand has planted. And finally, the Psalmist promises a return to God: Then we will no more withdraw from you; / give us new life, and we will call upon your name. / O LORD, God of hosts, restore us; / if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.

- Similarly, the Lord invites us to seek forgiveness whenever we turn from him, and to receive his tender mercy. He wants to *give us new life*, no matter how we have failed. No sin is beyond God's mercy.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:6-9

- Despite the many ways our society threatens and destroys the gift of human life, God reminds us: *"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."* Prayer is essential in all our efforts to build a culture of life in our world.
- As God's people, we are called to seek what is *true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and gracious*, so that we can be the *choicest vines*, producing an abundant harvest. One of the ways we do this is by loving one another as Christ loves us, especially by caring for those whose lives are most in need of protection.
- During this Respect Life Month, ask Jesus how he is specifically calling *you* to follow in his footsteps. How is he calling you to care for the lives of your neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable?
- As the Second Reading encourages us: *Keep on doing what you have learned and received and*

heard and seen in me. Let us ask the Lord for an outpouring of grace, especially the graces of wisdom, humility, and courage, as well as open and generous hearts, that we may respond to his call to serve the gift of human life.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43

- Today's Gospel demonstrates God's faithfulness. God sent his own Son for the sake of our redemption. Jesus gave his own life in order for us to be able to be with him forever. How else can we respond, except with love for the one who has loved us so much? Let us be encouraged to labor in the vineyard, trusting that the Lord will bring forth good fruit through our faithfulness.
- In our efforts to follow the Lord and bear good fruit, there may be times when it is difficult. It may feel like the vineyard of our heart has been neglected, trampled, and laid to waste. But we can find strength and comfort in knowing the Lord has not abandoned us. The keeper of the vineyard has not forgotten his *cherished plant*.
- Let us recall the words of today's Gospel acclamation: *I have chosen you from the world, says the Lord, to go and bear fruit that will remain.* We must persevere and work to protect the lives of those who cannot speak for themselves or who feel as if their lives are not worth living. We are called to be set apart for the work of the Kingdom of God, proclaiming in word and deed the sanctity of every human life, from conception to natural death.

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