

Homily by Monsignor Michael Hazard

St. Joseph Church, 936 Lake Street, Kalamazoo Michigan 49001

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

October 2, 2011

Myopia: nearsightedness. A common, maybe almost universal, affliction. It means we see things close up but not so clearly at a distance.

Not just a physical problem. We have this problem in the moral realm: we see something that looks like fun up close (temptation); but we can't see the consequences that lay ahead. So we do what seems like fun (sin) and later pay the consequences.

We also have this problem in our relationship with God. This seems to me the central problem in the Scriptures today. It's almost as if the people Jesus is talking to in the Gospel, the people in the place of leadership in the religious world of Jesus' time: it's almost as if they can't see beyond their day-to-day religious customs to the over-arching reason for their prayer: their relationship with God. It's like they can no longer see they are not the owners of the vineyard but only tenants.

In response to Jesus' parable, they convict themselves with their own judgment.

Now we ourselves should have problems with the parable. Just like the parable of the prodigal son, or like the other parable of the man who leaves the 99 sheep to go in search of the one, and then throws a party for the one when the lost is found, this parable doesn't make plain common sense. If the owner of the vineyard discovers that his servants are mistreated, even killed by the tenant farmers, he is not going to send more servants. He is going to send his muscle-men, his thugs. They will get what he wants. And he will never risk the life of his beloved son.

But, of course, the Gospel of Jesus is not common sense. It is Divine sense. It is the message of a love that we can't imagine, and that it may be very difficult for us even to accept. But it is the message of our hope.

What is the fruit which the divine Vineyard owner wants from us who have a place of responsibility now? It is that we recognize that we are not the center of the universe, the owners of the vineyard, but we are the vineyard itself, for whose benefit the vineyard owner sent his beloved Son: to care for us, to help us to see what we can be, and *be* what we can be.

God only wants us to put our trust in him in the way Jesus himself did. What keeps us from doing that?

The faith of the Church, the faith that makes us one family in Christ, is the corrective lens that will enable us to see where serving God, trusting God, will lead us.

Let's take a minute of reflection with these thoughts.