

Friday 10th March 2023.

2nd Week of Lent – Cycle ‘A’

1st Reading = Genesis 37:3-4,12-13,17-28

Resp. Psalm = Ps 105:16-21

Gospel = Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Jesus uses a parable (with a situation that is well-known to them), and a Scripture reference to condemn the Pharisees. The end of the Gospel tells us: “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke about them” (Matthew 21:45). Jesus unravels the story of tenant farmers, filled with avarice, who stood united against an absentee landlord. The tenant farmer and foreign owner situation was the norm in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and Jews within Judea and Galilee felt Greeks and Romans who settle there deprived the indigenous population of their birthright. The story reversed the symbolic roles for the audience; the farmers became evil, while the foreign, absentee landlord was God, His servants were the Prophets, His son was the Lord himself, the vineyard was the Kingdom. With this in mind, and to answer the rhetorical question about the fate of the farmers, Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22-23 which says: “The stone which the builders rejected is become the chief corner-stone. This has been done of the Lord; and it is wonderful in our eyes” (this is from the Septuagint version of the Bible but beginning from verses 10-23 will help us understand the background better). This psalm was sung as a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, depending upon God even amid a siege around Jerusalem, seeing that siege broken, then, celebrating the victory in a parade outside the walls of the capital. In the context in which Jesus presents before them, Judea was the stone spurned by foreign powers, but used by the Lord as a cornerstone to His Kingdom. Hence, Jesus’ statement of the cornerstone. But who is this cornerstone He is talking about; it certainly refers to a new people (His Apostles, disciples and all who live according to God’s will), producing good fruit.

It is a normal occurrence to reject something for whatever reason. Basically, that begins with a process of analysis and judgement, then selection of what we want or what works in accord with our motives, beliefs, or objectives (whether they be right/wrong, bad/good), and it ends with rejection (of things that are not within our speculative or ideological radar). The parable Jesus used above was a pointer to His Passion, death but most especially His resurrection. Although He was rejected by the religious and political leaders of the day (which led to His death), He rose from the dead and in that manner, He became the keystone of a new

temple, the temple of the church (the old and new people who believed in Him). We too, at some point in our lives or every now and then, might have been inclined to appreciate something; but there comes a moment when want to throw it by the side, and maybe even curse the day we came in contact with it, or the people involved. This has happened far too often with humans, especially those whose works do not seem to be rewarding, those who are not recognised for the little efforts they do, those who work at the background and those who just want some sense of clarity and sincerity. But there also comes a time when whatever and whoever we reject and slow to accept can be the very means and channels through which God may want to speak to or save us. God can work powerfully in our lives and, through us, in the lives of others in the very things and people we reject. A good look at our history would give us great lessons. For most countries, those who really fought for the liberation of their societies were those who were subject to rejection and even oppression, but their ideologies and the fruits of their hard work are what we enjoy today, and those who rejected them remained empty gongs and were exposed with time. Today, we know that their motives were flawed, selfish, filled with pride and consolidation of power, set to enslave others by every means to achieve their schemes and devoid of human progress. But where are they today. The response of Jesus to the leaders of His time is a lesson for ours. God always has a purpose for whoever and what is rejected. May St Gustav the Hermit, St Anastasia the Patrician and the Forty Martyrs of Armenia intercede for us, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

A Fruitful Season of Lent.

Fr Kevin. N. Lereh, m.ss.cc

Together in prayer.