

27A SML 2017
MT 21:33-43

This morning's parable was told by Our Blessed Lord on Tuesday of the Holy Week before the Paschal Pattern of passion, death and resurrection. It was a parable which tied up the prophecies of the Old Testament and pointed to what would happen to Him in three day's time.

The temple rulers had just finished questioning Our Blessed Lord concerning His authority. The position they took was that they were the representatives and guardians of the people; therefore, they must prevent the people from being misled. Our Blessed Lord answered them in a parable, showing them the kind of guardians and guides they were.

A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, hewed out a winepress, and built a tower. (21:33)

- ✓ The One who planted the vineyard was God Himself, which His listeners already knew from reading from Isaiah Chapter 5, this morning's first reading.
- ✓ The wall that was put around it was a wall that separated the Jewish people from the other nations of Gentile gods and allowed Yahweh to tend His fruitful vine, Israel, with special care.
- ✓ The winepress, which was hollowed out of rock, referred to the temple.

- ✓ The tower represented God's special care that He exercised over His people.
- ✓ And the servants sent to obtain his produce represented the prophets, and the maltreatment they received at the hands of God's people. But God's love was not wearied by the cruelty of the vinedressers, for He sent more vinedressers, and eventually He sent His son.

Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, "They will respect my son." 21:37

It is as if God was talking to Himself to cast His love in clearer light.

Those who heard Our Blessed Lord fully understood the many references He had made, to the way the prophets, who spoke for God, and their words, were ignored. They also heard Him declare Himself to be the Son of God. And now, under the thin veil of this parable, Our Blessed Lord was answering the question, namely, by what authority He did certain things - - on the authority that He is God.

Then, revealing to His listeners the passion and death that He would undergo at their hands, He continued:

They seized (his son), threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 21:38-40

With unmistakable clarity, Our Blessed Lord revealed his Paschal Pattern, of passion and death, that He would suffer at their hands, that He would be cast “out of the vineyard” to the hill of Calvary which was outside the walls of Jerusalem, outside the walls of the vineyard. Rebuffs, injuries, insults and eventual death would be the greeting extended to the Son of the Heavenly Father. And within three days of the telling of the story, it all came true. The keepers of the vineyard, namely the high priests Annas and Caiphas, cast Our Blessed Lord out of the city on to a hill named Calvary, above a dump named Gehenna, and put Him to death.

For those who killed the Son, Our Blessed Lord sent the minds of His hearers back to Psalm 117:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done.

And the very next verse, which was not included in this morning’s gospel, continued the analogy of the stone, taken from the prophet Daniel, for those who rejected the Stone, who rejected Our Blessed Lord:

Any man who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; and if it falls on a man he will be crushed by it. 21:44

As the cornerstone of faith, you can either accept Our Blessed Lord, or reject Him, but the rejection is the stone which crushes. Either Our Blessed Lord would be the rock on which men would build the foundation of their lives, and the Paschal pattern of passion, death and resurrection, or the rejection of Him, which would crush them: passion, death and no resurrection.

What a sad sad week for the American people after the massacre in Las Vegas. No one is adequate to offer any consolation, outside of what Our Blessed Lord can offer as the rock on which we believers build the foundation of our lives, and the paschal pattern of passion, death and resurrection, which leads us to Our Blessed Lord, which offers us His inner peace.

For us as believers, Our Blessed Lord's life did not end three days after today's gospel, on the Friday called Good.

- ✓ On Good Friday, Annas and Caiphas did not get the last word.
- ✓ On Good Friday, death did not get the last word.
- ✓ Because on Easter Sunday, Our Blessed Lord got the last word.
- ✓ Because on Easter Sunday, resurrection and life got the last word.

- ✓ Because on Easter Sunday, the first words out of Our Blessed Lord's mouth are, "Peace be with you."

I'm reading a great book right now entitled The Divine Dance by Richard Rohr. Rohr says:

In the men's rite of passage work that I've done, I tell the men on the last night before initiation, that success has nothing, absolutely nothing, to teach you spiritually after the age of thirty. It just feels good. That's all. Everything you learn at my age, and I'm in my seventies now, is by failure, humiliation and suffering; things fall apart.

Dissolution is the only thing that allows the soul to go to a deeper place. p. 63

It's passion and death that teaches us spiritually.

And why is that? Because the pattern has been set for the way all of us are wired. Rohr continues:

When God as Logos (God as meaning, logic) is missing, there is no meaningful direction or purpose in our lives.

We each have to start at zero. We have to figure it all out on our own, yet how do we know how to connect the overwhelming plethora of dots? What matters and what doesn't? The sad thing for us as Christians is that we who are supposed to know this pattern seem, for the most part,

as ignorant about it as everyone else. We do not know, believe or trust that all reality has a paschal pattern. To put it plainly, change, death, and transformation are part of the deal. Resurrection and renewal are the final goal and result.

As a result of last Sunday's massacre in Las Vegas, and the countless acts of terrorism and violence that has plagued us since terrorism took its place on the world's stage, our exterior response should be to do all in our power to end terrorism and violence, and bring those left to justice.

But our interior response should be to learn something spiritually (says Rohr as this is part of the pattern, not God's will, but "it is what it is," part of the pattern; Las Vegas is passion and death.

To learn how to keep our inner peace intact and "Do not be afraid," a command God has given us 365 times in the Bible, no coincidence I am convinced, is one day for every day of the year is resurrection. This is the paschal pattern that has been templated for us by Our Blessed Lord since the year 33 AD.

I'll close by recommending another book edited by A.J. Russell entitled God Calling. This book offers a daily

meditation that's a paragraph long, and reading it for a second year in a row, I've read things in the second year that I did not read in the first. And there have been more days than not when the meditation has been spot on, and I mean "spot on," addressing what I'm dealing with at that moment.

Here's the meditation for Sunday, October 1st, the day of the Las Vegas shooting:

Look to no other source of Salvation. Only look unto Me. See no other supply. Look unto Me, and you shall be saved. Regard Me as your only supply. That is the secret of prosperity for you, and you in your turn shall save many from poverty and distress. Whatever danger threatens look unto Me.... Whatever you desire or need, or desire or need for others, look to Me. Claim all from My Storehouse. Claim, claim, claim. Remember that I fed the Children of Israel with Heaven-sent manna. I made a way through the Red Sea for them. I led them through the wilderness of privation, difficulty, discipline. I led them into a land flowing with milk and honey. So trust. So be led. Rejoice. These are your wilderness days. But surely and safely, you are being led to your Canaan of Plenty.

Without a doubt, the survivors, the family members of the deceased are now going through their “desert, their Red Sea, their wilderness.” They are going through their passion and death.

With all eyes on God, they will be led to their Canaan of Plenty. They will reach resurrection.

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