

Father O'Connor's Homily for 4 October 2026
Twenty-Seventh Ordinary Sunday – A
Weekend Three: Annual Stewardship Commitment Sunday

Isaiah 5: 1-7
Philippians 4: 6-9
Matthew 21: 33-43

This is our Annual Stewardship Renewal Commitment Weekend. Thank you for being a part of this great opportunity for our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families to grow as disciples of Jesus, as we make our commitments in the areas of time, talent and treasure for the next twelve months.

I know that many of you have brought your commitment cards with you today, all filled-out. Thank you! You may place them in the collection basket along with your regular Sunday offering. Others of you have mailed in your commitment cards or submitted them online. Thank you!

Perhaps you forgot to fill-out a card or to bring it with you today. Would you kindly do so this week? In advance, I thank you too.

And there are commitment cards for both parishes in the pews. Because this is so important, you are welcome to fill one out right now as I share some thoughts on today's Gospel passage.

Thanks, everyone, as we make our plans for our stewardship journey together over the next twelve months.

Storytelling has been popular ever since human beings learned to put words together to form sentences. Stories help to make a teaching easier to understand and easier to remember.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, told many stories called “parables.” Someone wisely described a parable as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

The parables of Jesus fall into two main categories: “window parables” and “mirror parables.”

A “window parable” is a simple story that teaches about God or about God's kingdom. It is a “verbal window” that we can look through. It often begins with the words, “The kingdom of God is like.” An example is Jesus' story about the Lost Sheep, which compares a shepherd's concern for a wandering sheep to His Father's concern for a wayward sinner.

A “mirror parable” acts as a “verbal mirror” where the characters in Jesus’ parable represent people in His listening audience. Today’s Parable of the Vineyard Owner is a good example of this.

Let’s look more closely at how this parable’s cast of characters served as a mirror for the chief priests and the elders of the people to see themselves in it.

The vineyard owner is, of course, God.

The vineyard, as today’s First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah and the Responsorial Psalm that we sang tell us: “The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.”

The vineyard tenants are the leaders of Israel.

The first group of servants, sent by the owner to obtain his produce, are the early prophets that God sent to Israel.

The second group of servants are the later prophets that God sent.

The owner’s son, whom the tenants killed, is Jesus.

The new tenant farmers, to whom the owner then leases his vineyard, are the apostles of Jesus. They are the new leaders of God’s people.

This brings us to an important question. Did Jesus intend this parable to have meaning only for the chief priests and the elders of the people, or is there meaning for us too? And, of course, the answer is that there is something in it for us as well. Let me list four things.

First, it summarizes the biblical story of salvation. The first leasing of the vineyard refers to the Old Covenant. The second leasing of the vineyard refers to the New Covenant.

Second, the parable affirms that Jesus is the Son of God. The last person sent to the tenant farmers is not another servant of the vineyard owner. He is the vineyard owner’s own son.

Third, the parable affirms that Jesus’ apostles are the new leaders of God’s people.

And fourth, the parable teaches about God’s patience with us and about our accountability to God. The vineyard owner made three efforts to invite the tenant farmers to change their ways. When he saw that his patience was proving to be futile, he passed judgment on the tenants, holding them accountable for their actions.

It is the same way with God and us. Right now our Heavenly Father is infinitely patient with us. But the time will eventually come when God’s

patience will give way to God's judgment. One day, each one of us will be held accountable for how we lived our lives here on earth, whether for good or for evil.

A parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

A "window parable" is a story that gives us a "verbal window" that we can look through and see what God or God's kingdom is like.

A "mirror parable" acts as a "verbal mirror" that enables us to see ourselves as characters in the story and realize what we are like.

And Jesus, the Master Storyteller, allows us to see what He is like. Those who came before Him were messengers of God. But they were servants. Jesus is the Son. This parable contains one of the clearest claims Jesus ever made to be unique, to be different from even the greatest of those who came before Him. He is God's Son.

And this parable tells of the self-sacrifice of Jesus. It makes clear that Jesus knew what lay ahead for Him. In this parable the hands of the wicked men killed the owner's son. Jesus did not die because he was forced to die. Jesus, as true God and true man, went willingly and open-eyed to His self-sacrificing death. And why? To save us sinners and offer us eternal life.

There are at least a thousand lessons to be learned at Calvary. And then there are the mysteries beyond those lessons which bring us to the shores of an endless sea.

But perhaps the forgiveness of our sins by Jesus on the cross should be the lesson that we consider today in this Parable of the Vineyard Owner, whose son the wicked vineyard tenants killed – prefiguring what Jesus would willingly do for us and for our salvation.

"Burdens are lifted at Calvary. Jesus is very near," as the hymn text tells us.

What more could Jesus do for us?

So much more we each must do to honor Him.

What is your burden? Don't be afraid to acknowledge it and give it to Him.

"Burdens are lifted at Calvary. Jesus is very near."

This parable gives us a glimpse of what the most merciful Son of God, our Savior, is like.