

# OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

## HOMILY FOR 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2017

I was recently fortunate to have a week in Portugal, and it was again interesting to me that when I am in a foreign country this increases my sense of feeling small or insignificant, since I am not confident when communication is difficult. So, when we went to Mass it was quite special being able to follow what was going on. Key moments were easily recognised e.g. Confiteor, Gospel acclamation, Sanctus, the Epiclesis/consecration, memorial acclamation, the doxology followed by the Our Father, the sign of peace and *Agnus Dei*, and of course the Eucharist. Without understanding the spoken words, I felt at peace, and indeed the atmosphere created was one of warm welcome and a deep certainty that this place was also home.

I sometimes wonder how well we appreciate the gift of the Mass, how it is offered universally to everyone. And in an unexpected way, partaking in Mass with a language I couldn't understand allowed the Mass itself to speak to me – As we will see in a moment the people of Israel were given a gift, but they neglected it so it was taken away.

So please listen for a moment because right here right now, we are re-living a gift from God and we should treasure and nurture it. We are celebrating with worship Jesus' sacrifice, and we are joining in with the marriage banquet between God and his Church. The Jews used the term *anamnesis*. This is a reality we often forget, or perhaps have never been told.

And consider, when we receive and meet with Jesus, what is this for? He gave himself to his disciples so they would become like him, give themselves to others and tell the world about him. He gives us himself so that we can be changed to be like him; so that we in turn can give ourselves to others and show them who Jesus is. (We are what we eat! But as St Thomas Aquinas says, a sacrament's power to affect us depends on our disposition when we receive it)

In the first reading from Samuel, God gave Israel everything; God sings of his love for Israel, his vineyard, and reminds us he prepared the ground himself! And then he came and looked for the good grapes one would expect from such a well-cared for vineyard. Why didn't they produce good grapes? Because His people didn't nurture what God had given them, they effectively repeated the sin of Adam and Eve by choosing themselves and their own ways ahead of God's; so God simply left them to the consequences of their own choices. Perhaps when we feel isolated or fearful (and I must make clear I do not include medical illness

here), part of the reason is that if we are honest we have chosen our own desires over God's.

And Jesus picks up where Isaiah left off, he even uses the same words as Isaiah to make sure his listeners get the message. Israel's religious leaders, the tenants in this story, haven't learnt from the past. Instead of producing good fruits, they killed the servants i.e. the prophets who were sent to collect the harvest. And of course Jesus foreshadows his own crucifixion when he says the tenants' final outrage will be to kill the owner's son.

Today's Gospel ends with Jesus saying that the kingdom of God will be taken from them (Israel) and given to a people who will produce its fruit. So, who is this people?

Yes — it is us— The Church!

John 15.1-8: we are each a vine in his vineyard.

Philippians 1.1-11: we are called to produce fruits (to the glory and praise of God).

James 1.18: we should be the first fruits of his creatures))

We are the people who today are called to produce fruit.

Of course to make a bottle of wine you can't just watch grapes grow, there is lots of work involved.

We need to make sure we don't get overcome by worldly anxieties. As Paul says in the Epistle we need to fill our hearts and minds with everything that is noble, good and pure. (I suggest to you all that this means reading, even studying the Bible; and certainly it means praying more than just at Sunday Mass). If we do, then the peace of God WILL be with us.

John 15.5: "Alleluia, I have chosen you from the world" says the Lord, "to go and bear fruit that will remain"

So, don't let the grapes you have been given go to waste, go and make yourself and your neighbour into a bottle of claret, i.e. something that lasts.

**Rev Jonathan de Kretser**