**Prune Us to Yield Magnificently Sweet Grapes**

*Fr Louis Fowóyò̩*

The readings of today tell us that as steward of creation, we should show our gratitude to the creator.

* Some questions to ponder upon today include: How can being a good steward of creation show our thankfulness and respect to God and our neighbor? How does caring for creation helps us to offer a fruitful harvest to the creator? What one thing can we do to be better stewards of creation?
* Psalm 80 offers us a reflection and a prayer to be able to have a change of heart because we have in many anyways offended the Lord who loves us so much.
* “A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it. It put forth its foliage to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.”
* As the people of God, we are like the vine that God transplanted from the awful condition of human degradation to become a flourishing group of love. God sanitized the land where He planted His loved ones before He places them there. God’s children are placed on His right hand so that He will perpetually gaze His face upon them.

1st Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7; Opened with how God labored to prepare a soothing and comfortable condition of habitation for His loved ones and how they, through an ungrateful life have refused to make good what God has provided.

* “My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes.”
* This reading challenges us to action. We are not to be insolent or indifferent in creation. We are called to contribute our labor to make creation more beautiful.
* We are called to love the common good, strengthen the weak and care for this world in which we live. We are called to help protect all life, to prepare for a better future and for the Kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.
* This reading does not shy away from telling us what will happen if we refuse to be responsible for the world we live in.
* “Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but overgrown with thorns and briers; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it.”
* There is no doubt that in many parts of the world today, despite the hope given us by the Lord, what we give back is injustice, bloodshed and agonizing pain inflicted on others.

2nd Reading: Philippians 4:6-9; St Paul, tells us to give room for good in the world, in our neighbors and in ourselves. That is what gives honor to God and makes a difference between us and inanimate things.

* “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
* if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”
* We are to imitate the goodness in Him who has created us as St Paul himself was bold to make himself an example to follow.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43; this parable of Jesus, gives a perfect description of what God will do if we refuse to cooperate with His grace to build a better world.

* Until the time of Jesus, humanity has continually mistreated the God who continue to send us His love. We have shown ingratitude severally God. However, God never treated us the way we deserve, but always give us a reason for hope.
* In the final hour, God sent His Only Begotten Son to show us the way back to Him. Rejecting redemption is saying that we prefer to continue to enjoy the life of sin in the wilderness.
* Our actions to remain in sin will not be without consequence. “Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.”

It is good for us to end this reflection by recalling the prayer offered by the Psalm 80. We should make this prayer our own at all times. It is our hope to salvation.

* “Once again, O Lord of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what Your right hand has planted, the son of man whom You yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from You; give us new life, and we will call upon Your name. O Lord, God of hosts, restore us, if Your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.”