

The Church of Saint Boniface  
October 4, 2020  
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time



*What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?*

(Matthew 21:40)

# FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

*Guest Reflection*

## The Real Story

There is a very powerful truth-telling device, as we saw two Sundays ago: the device called *story*. Our brains love stories that include events with “before-and-after” built right in, along with suspense, action, relationships and intercommunication; not to mention emotion and disappointment and elation and so on. These elements are the most like daily experience of any device we have in the language.

So, Sunday we will hear several tales of a vineyard.

The first story tells about “a friend” who carefully built a vineyard: clearing stones, building a watchtower, planting the choicest vines (First Reading). He even “hewed out a wine press.” But the vineyard yielded bad grapes. God tells the people of Jerusalem and Judah in vivid language that they themselves are this vineyard, and that he is going to destroy it and trample it down. They would not let God’s love grow up among them.

In the Gospel Jesus embroiders this tale. In just one sentence he handles the part about planting a vineyard, digging out a wine press, building a tower. Then he goes further.

In his version he says that the owner rents his rich vineyard to tenants, as was the custom, and he trusts them to raise choice grapes for him. In due season he sends his servants to collect the yield—which must have been great because the tenants dishonestly want to keep everything including the vineyard. But the tenants beat or stone or even kill the servants!

Next, a surprising, seemingly implausible twist to the tale. The owner decides to send his own son, thinking that the tenants will surely respect him. Would you have done the same? Wouldn’t you or I have said, “I will keep my family away from these criminals”? I surely would. But not the owner. He sends his only son into the trap and the tenants kill him.

The details of the two stories are different, but isn’t it the same story, about God punishing those who fail to produce? Actually the two parables are not the same. There is much, much more in the Gospel. Jesus hints at this afterwards:

*Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.*

This is a new metaphor, and it is the key to the Gospel tale. It fills the story with dramatic new meaning. The son sent into the vineyard is Jesus himself! He is to be rejected and killed, just as the prophets and the owner’s son were. But here is the difference: as God’s son he is entirely willing to go among the sinning people. He lives by compassion, so danger takes second place.

If the main character in the Gospel were called *Life*, and it had its own choices to make, it would desire to turn into another being, one called *Love*. Life always yearns to go back to its source, the everlasting union called by that simple name, love. Greed and disregard stop this progress. True Life gets buried. It rises again when we look to Jesus on Sundays. He is love. He is there for us in our vineyard.

God sent his own son into the trap of human life not because life is perfect, but because love is.

— John Foley, SJ

*The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
by the Lord has this been done,  
and it is wonderful in our eyes.*

(Matthew 21:42)



SAINT BONIFACE  
FIRST COMMUNION CLASS  
**Mass with “Rite of Enrollment” Ceremony**

Sunday, October 4

12:00 p.m. in the Church

*Please keep our candidates in your prayers.*

### MASS INTENTIONS

|         |         |  |
|---------|---------|--|
| Oct. 4  | 8:00 AM | <b>James &amp; Regina Fisher</b> , by Marc & Regina Raboin |
| Oct. 10 | 4:00 PM | <b>Leon Tarbell</b> , by Bob & Geri Gardner                |
| Oct. 17 | 4:00 PM | <b>Melissa Wagner</b> , by Bob & Geri Gardner              |

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 p.m. in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

NO DAILY MASS on October 7, 8 and 9  
NO 6:00 p.m. MASS on Sunday, October 11

### COLLECTION REPORT

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Week of September 27            |         |
| - Sunday Offering               | \$2,027 |
| - Fuel/Maintenance              | 160     |
| - Religious Ed/Catholic Schools | 223     |
| Total                           | \$2,410 |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at [www.stboniface-lunenburg.org](http://www.stboniface-lunenburg.org)

Live the Gospel of *Life*  
RESPECT LIFE MONTH  
October 2020



### GRAND RAFFLE TICKETS

Please return sold tickets with stubs and donations in the offertory basket at the church entrance or to the parish office. If you would like additional tickets, please call or email the parish office.

### GIFT BASKET RAFFLE

Yes, we will also have our famous gift basket raffle this year. Watch for more info!



### WELCOME TO THE NEWEST MEMBER OF OUR CATHOLIC FAMILY

Michael Pratt, son of Andrew and Amanda Pratt, was Baptized at Saint Boniface on Saturday, September 19. His godparents are James Ridlen II and Kirsten Ridlen.

St. Bernard Cemetery  
Lot & Columbarium Sale  
Oct. 1-31

Lots available in the new Calvary Section. Columbarium niches also at reduced prices. Call Ray Spagnuolo at the cemetery office: 978-342-4820



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165 Electric Ave., Fitchburg (Tues-Sun 12-7 PM)



## A True Vineyard

The church is the vineyard of the Lord. It **has been placed by God “on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines.”**

Unfortunately, what grows in this vineyard is often not a crop of grapes but wild fruit, of no use to the master.

We have within our community a good share of selfishness, power grabbing, and short-sightedness. The very same social ills that we see in the world at large can be found right here within our own community: racism, sexism, economic injustice, and marginalization.

**We pray that God “forgive our failings.” We hope that God will “take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted.” The challenge is for us to become a true vineyard of the Lord, free of all the sinful conditions that we lament in the world. We work for the day when Christians will form a community of Christ united in love and service.**

Is it too much to hope for? No, it is not, as long as we maintain our faith in our God, **who can “lead us to seek beyond our reach.”**

Although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, her members fail to live by them with all the fervor they should.

***As a result, the radiance of the Church’s face shines less brightly in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God’s kingdom is retarded.***

*Every Catholic must therefore aim at Christian perfection and, each according to his station, play his part so that the Church ... may daily be more purified and renewed.*

Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, 1964:4

— Gerald Darring

## Saints of the Week

October 5.

**SAINT MARIA FAUSTINA KOWALSKA**

A Sister of Our Lady of Mercy, Saint Maria Faustina was blessed with unique messages from Christ concerning his mercy and forgiveness. These messages came at a time when many people viewed God as a strict judge. Like Pope Francis, Saint Faustina emphasized the mercy of God. She died in 1938, and was canonized in 2000: a truly modern saint.



October 6.

**SAINTS BRUNO**

Today we celebrate a saint who was never canonized and who wanted to live in solitude and prayer. Saint Bruno was a Carthusian who took great steps to find a quiet place to live in spite of being asked to assist the Pope in Rome.



October 7.

**OUR LADY of the ROSARY**

The rosary is a truly Catholic devotion. It is a form of prayer and meditation in honor of Mary and celebrates the mysteries of Jesus' and Mary's lives. It has been called a miniature catechism highlighting the key events of our faith. Our Lady of the Rosary remembers Mary's intercession and celebrates this popular devotion.



October 8.

**SAINT JOHN LEONARDI**

Saint John Leonardi was a priest and founder of the Clerks Regular of the Mother of God. He also formed the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Father Leonardi and his priests became a great power for good in 16th century Italy.

*Saint John Leonardi is the Patron Saint of Pharmacists.*



October 9.

**SAINT DENIS and COMPANIONS**

This martyr and patron of France is regarded as the first bishop of Paris. His popularity is due to a series of legends, especially those connecting him with the great abbey church of St. Denis in Paris.

*Saint Denis is the Patron Saint of France.*



## The Vineyard Church

We delude ourselves dangerously if we think our major task in reading scripture is to examine the historical period in which it was written. Admittedly, such study is a valuable tool for critical distance from and understanding of revelation's context.

But if the word of God lives for us, it must be spoken now. **It must be received now. Paul's charge to the Philippians is that they live what they have learned and accepted. Living the word, more than the study of it, yields "God's own peace beyond all understanding."** We put our very stewardship at risk if we follow a gospel other than that of Jesus.

If we are concerned only with knowing the historical context of Isaiah's vineyard story, we may find out something about the people of Judah and their infidelities, but we will miss what the prophet has to say to us. And if prophets have nothing to say to us, why bother listening to them at all?

What if our contemporary church is seen as the new House of Israel, God's cherished vineyard? What if we are that land, carefully cleared of stones, now filled with vines delicately planted? Then Isaiah's words might shake us. **"He looked for judgment, but saw bloodshed! He looked for justice, but heard cries."**

Despite everything that was done for this vineyard, despite all that was given, there was no true yield. So the owner gave the verdict: it shall all be torn down, eroded, and trampled, overgrown with briars and thorns. Are these words addressed to the church?

There is a temptation to make our holy books, even our privileged "New" Testament readings, into a collection of quaint bygone accounts, comfortably shelved in a mausoleum. Now and then, we prod the dead text, safely kept at arm's length, with some thin academic stick that protects us from what we poke.

When Jesus looks at scripture, it's a different story. He recalls Isaiah's parable of the vineyard, but only to engage it for his own time and people. The leaders of his age were rejecting him, son of the vineyard's Lord, just as they rejected the delegations of prophets before him.

What is worse, they reject him as the Son of God, even kill him, in the false hope that they will then get the inheritance for themselves.

When the Church applies this Gospel story merely to Jesus' context, two things happen. A crude conclusion is drawn that the chief priests and elders (and even the Jewish people, as the story was later diabolically interpreted) were the source of Christ's rejection.

More foolish yet, we Christians presume that we ourselves do not reject Christ in our own lives.

At our safe distance, we can shake our heads. See the results of their rejection of Jesus? They are all brought to a bad end, and the prized vineyard is left to others.

**That's us. We are the inheritors of the new promise. We harvest what Israel did not. It's as simple as that, we think.** But if we stop there, the gospel will never strike us.

We simply avoid its force.

One of the great virtues of the Hebrew scriptures and those who conscientiously read them is that such an easy way out is never taken.

The Jews not only recorded the bad news prophets brought; they remembered it and relived it in the telling. That is what Jesus was doing. And that is what we are called to do if we wish to encounter the Word of God.

The parable of the vineyard, in both Isaiah's account and Jesus' reformulation of it for his contemporaries, must in some way be a message given to today's church. Although we believe in Jesus' promise that the armies of hell will not prevail against us, that should not lead us to think that we ourselves cannot squander the gift of the vineyard.

The "always reforming" Church must always ask itself whether it seizes the vineyard inheritance for itself, rather than for the Lord of the harvest. It is only at great peril to themselves that the preacher, the mediator, and the institution, present themselves, rather than the Savior-Son, as the way of salvation. We put our very stewardship at risk if we follow a gospel other than that of Jesus.

Those who warn us that we neglect the ways of justice and close our ears to the cries of the poor are simply reminding us of the very gospel we proclaim. Those young people, the ones who wonder whether we stewards of the gospel are actually living as if the gospels didn't exist, are not posing the question from a "worldly" perspective. They are posing it because they have received the seed of God's word and long to bear its fruit.

Isaiah promised that there would remain a "holy remnant" of faithful followers, who despite many infidelities carry the truth, cherish the message, and steadfastly tend the vineyard.

This remnant, I think at times, may be the saints or the "little" people—those who aspire to no human greatness, fabulous wealth, rank, or privilege. Perhaps it is they who, even in these hard days when many Christians seem to reject Christ as the rock of their lives, continue to build on him as their cornerstone.

— John Pilch

*"He looked for justice, but hark, the outcry!"*

(Isaiah 5:7)



## Tenants and Owners

**Today's parable offers an opportunity to appreciate the complexity of the gospel tradition.**

**Matthew's version of the parable contains elements that are difficult to attribute to Jesus: allusions to the Greek Bible (Mt 21:33, 42), allegorical features (the vineyard is Israel, the tenant farmers are Israel's leaders, the householder is God, etc.), and others.**

The version of this parable in the Coptic (= the Egyptian tradition) Gospel of Thomas 65 (dating from the beginning of the third century) doesn't contain allegorical elements and may be closer to the parable Jesus originally spoke.

The tenant farmers, that is, the leadership, must be replaced because they have not born fruit

In this simpler form, the parable reflects a reality familiar to all peasants, namely, the extortion practiced by hard-nosed absentee landowners.

### A Simple Parable

The vineyard owner lives in a different country (Mt 21:33). This was a common experience among peasants in Galilee. The owner rented the vineyard out to tenant farmers or share-croppers who worked the land in return for a fee or a percentage of the crop. The owner sent his agents on a regular basis to collect what was due.

Modern scholars have pieced together bits and pieces of information to gain a better understanding of the situation of tenant farmers based on what is known about peasant free-holders, that is, peasants who were fortunate enough to own and farm their own land. Some of the crop would have to be used for trade to gain other necessities of life.

There were also social dues (gifts), religious tithes, and taxes adding up to about 35 or 40 percent. About 20 percent of the annual produce would be left to feed the family and livestock of a free-holding peasant. Far less would be left to tenant farmers who also owed land rent.

From this perspective, the parable is easy to interpret. The tenant farmers are frustrated, desperate, and driven to violence. They beat and kill the first two delegations from the owner.

**When the owner's son shows up, they miscalculate and presume that the owner is dead.** Believing the son to be the sole surviving heir, they kill him in hope of gaining the vineyard for themselves. The plan is stupid and illegal, but they are driven by their otherwise hopeless situation.

The owner is very much alive. Everyone knows what his response will be. He will avenge himself against these foolish tenant farmers and lease to more compliant tenants.

The owner will not be deprived or defrauded of his harvest. If this was the form of the parable Jesus told, it was a warning to landowners against selfishly hoarding their harvest or exporting it.

### An Allegorized Parable

In general, a parable makes one point. The story is about an absentee landlord and his tenant farmers. In an allegory, every element of the story means something else. **Good storytellers don't explain their stories (or jokes). The point is clear.** When a story or parable is interpreted, inevitably the meaning is not what appears on the surface.

In Mt 21:43 Jesus (or the preachers, or Matthew) appears to make an allegory out of the parable, perhaps on the basis of Isaiah 5:1-7. But note carefully the differences between Matthew and Isaiah. There are no tenant farmers in Isaiah; God destroyed the vineyard itself.

Clearly in Matthew the problem lies with the leadership of Israel and not with Israel itself as in Isaiah (Is 5:5-6). The tenant farmers, that is, the leadership, must be replaced because they have not born fruit (see Mt 3:8-10; 7:16-20; 12:33; 13:8; 21:19). Thus, leadership will be transferred from the present group which has failed to a different group (preferable to the word "people" in Mt 21:43) that will produce proper fruit. This group is best identified as the leaders of the Judean-Christian community.

— John J. Pilch

# Saint Boniface Church

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## Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

## The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM  
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at [stbonifaceparish@verizon.net](mailto:stbonifaceparish@verizon.net) or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 [nancycieri@comcast.net](mailto:nancycieri@comcast.net) to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 [sj33@msn.com](mailto:sj33@msn.com).

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email [kofc16480@gmail.com](mailto:kofc16480@gmail.com).

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## PARISH STAFF:

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| Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK  | 978-582-7110 |  |

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**Newcomers to St. Boniface** are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

***Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.***

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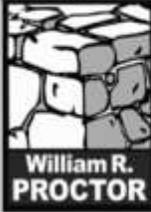
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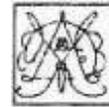
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