

HOMILY 27TH Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 4, 2020

I was listening to a podcast this past week. A man, whose name was Joe, was telling a story about his conversation with a wealthy business man. The business man was telling the story about how he built his business. He said that the secret to gaining great wealth is hard work. He believed that he deserved the wealth that he accumulated because he worked very hard. The business man said: “I got what I deserved through hard work and I can do whatever I want with my money.” Joe was offended by his statement. Joe knew that he started out with a lot of advantages that made his success easier. Joe’s father died when he was very young and his mother raised three children as a single mother. She had little education and she worked three jobs just to make ends meet. Joe said: “I have never met anyone who worked harder than my mother. Did she get what she deserved?”

In the first reading, we hear about a vineyard owner who did all of the right things to grow a great crop of grapes but all that he got was wild grapes. I think the moral of the passage is that we all get everything we need from God to be the best version of ourselves that we can be, and then it is up to us to bear good fruit. Now our culture would tell us that the successful business man that accumulated great wealth did produce good fruit. He was a great success. But what about Frank’s mother? She may not be considered successful by our culture’s standards, but she bore great fruit as well. I think a life devoted to raising her children was probably what God was calling her to do, and she did a fabulous job not only of raising her children, but by providing a great role model to her children. We should not compare their success. Success is going to look different for each of us.

In the Gospel parable, the vineyard owner still provided everything that is needed to produce a good crop of grapes, tenants worked hard and produced a good crop of grapes, but when it came time to give the vineyard owner the produce, the tenants refused. They forgot that the vineyard owner provided everything they needed to produce the grapes and without that they would have accomplished nothing. I think the wealthy business owner may have forgotten that as well, we do not know how he spent his money. But, I think he does have the responsibility to do some good with his wealth. Everything we have come from God and we are obligated to give back to God. I know God has been very good to me. He gave me parents who loved me and encouraged me. I was able to get a really good education. God gave me many mentors along the way that helped me. I have been very privileged. Whatever I have accomplished I know I did not do alone and everything started with God. I have the responsibility to serve others with the things that I have accomplished.

Now the tenants in the Gospel parable not only refused to give the vineyard owner what he deserved, they also beat, mistreated, stoned and killed everyone he sent to collect the produce, including the vineyard owner's son. The tenants had no respect for human life. Now we get to how God wants us to pay him back for all of the blessings he has given us. God wants us to respect all human life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death and everything in between. October is respect life month. We need to protect the unborn. This is very important but we cannot stop there. This includes the hungry, poor, sick, orphans the uneducated, the homeless, addicts, immigrants, victims of violence of all kinds, the elderly, LGBTQ people, people of all races and religions. This means all life. We need to remember

this when we vote. We need to vote for the candidates that will best respect all human life. And as we begin respect life month, we need to discern what God is calling each of us to do to respect human life. We are all different, have different gifts and abilities, and are in different situations, so that will mean different things for each of us. What the wealthy business man must do to respect life is probably very different from what the struggling single mother is called to do. Maybe it is time to become aware of our conscious and unconscious biases and overcome them. Who are the people in your life that deserve more respect than you are giving them? How are you going to observe Respect Life month?