

Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

October 4

When Franco Zeffirelli's *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* was released (1972), people were shocked by the movie's graphic nudity in the dramatic conversion scene. Son of a wealthy merchant, Francis' aimless adolescence ended when a failed military expedition led to his imprisonment and complete breakdown. Once home, Francis rediscovered God in the beauty of nature and the ugliness of human suffering, caring for lepers, praying in the little church of San Damiano, whose crucified Jesus he heard calling, "Repair my house, Francis, which is falling into ruins." Francis sold his possessions—and his father's—to fulfill this command. When his father objected, Francis disrobed: "I return the clothes, your name, and all you gave me: God alone is my Father now." Later, the pope would dream of a ragged friar stretching forth a single hand to prop up the crumbling papal Cathedral of Saint John Lateran. Francis indeed helped rebuild the universal Church, founding the Friars Minor (Franciscans), dying at a young forty-four, bearing the stigmata of the Christ whose living icon he remains—in the Church and far beyond it.

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Ask For Help

Ask Our Lady to help you. Ask her to entreat her Son to let you know what you should do.

—Bl. Marie Rose Durocher

The Gift Of The Reign Of God

Matthew's Gospel today expands on Isaiah's ballad considerably. A comparison with the same story in Mark's Gospel clearly shows us that here the author is busy teaching this community of Jewish Christians: "This is a story about Israel a long time ago; this is also a story about Jesus and the skeptical leaders."

Jesus as much as told these Jewish leaders that they were the tenants who first stoned their own prophets. And he told the leaders they were the tenants who would soon even dispose of him—Jesus—and, in doing so, would forfeit their privileged place of presenting to the world the promised Messiah.

"And this," says Matthew's Gospel, "is a story about you, the inheritors of what was first offered to Israel." The reign of God was first opened to Israel and is now given to the whole world, but it must be received as a gift. The first Christians are the new tenants in the vineyard. The deeper reality of the reign or kingdom of God is that it is available to everyone on the face of the earth—Israel included.

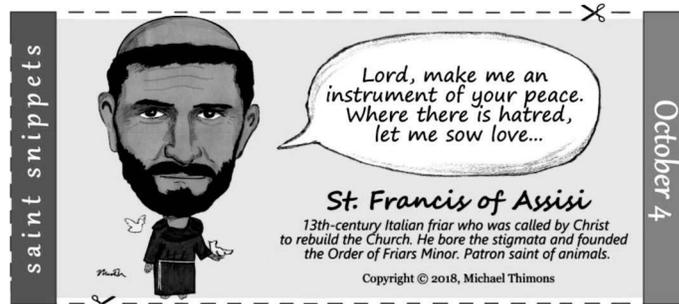
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Gal 1:6-12; Ps 111:1b-2, 7-9, 10c; Lk 10:25-37
Tuesday:	Gal 1:13-24; Ps 139:1b-3, 13-15; Lk 10:38-42
Wednesday:	Gal 2:1-2, 7-14; Ps 117:1bc, 2; Lk 11:1-4
Thursday:	Gal 3:1-5; Lk 1:69-75; Lk 11:5-13
Friday:	Gal 3:7-14; Ps 111:1b-6; Lk 11:15-26
Saturday:	Gal 3:22-29; Ps 105:2-7; Lk 11:27-28
Sunday:	Is 25:6-10a; Ps 23:1-6; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Mt 22:1-14 [1-10]

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time; Respect Life Sunday
Monday:	Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos
Tuesday:	St. Bruno; Bl. Marie Rose Durocher
Wednesday:	Our Lady of the Rosary
Friday:	St. Denis and Companions; St. John Leonardi
Saturday:	Blessed Virgin Mary



Master And Servant

Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.

—P. T. Barnum

Today's Readings

First Reading — The vineyard of the LORD is the house of Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7).

Psalm — The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel (Psalm 80).

Second Reading — God's peace will guard your hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-9).

Gospel — The kingdom of God will be given to those who will produce its fruit (Matthew 21:33-43).

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**Twenty-seventh Sunday
In Ordinary Time
October 4, 2020**

**Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.**

—Philippians 4:6

Treasures From Our Tradition

The confessional is a familiar setting in literature and drama. Everyone from Dostoevsky and Shakespeare down the line to *Seinfeld* has used the sacrament to tragic or comic effect or to reveal aspects of character otherwise hidden. All of this theater, from world classics to slapstick, has had a numbing effect on our own expectations, and has skewed how the culture looks at us and our struggle with sin and forgiveness, hope and healing.

Yet the artists are on to something. The reconciliation chapel is a place where hearts are laid bare, where honesty is the watchword, and people confess their deepest needs. It is also a place of rebirth, or at least realignment. It is, like the baptismal font, a place where something dies, and where something else is born. Today, although literature has barely caught up, the place is usually not the dark and gloomy cabinet of old; rather it is a chapel that speaks of peace, serenity, and the comfort of a welcome home. People in one parish were astonished recently to see their children skipping with delight as they left the place of their first confession. We have to wait a bit for world literature to catch up with this reality, but at least we can experience the joy of penance, the thrill of a new beginning, the assurance of God's love.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Today's first reading, psalm, and Gospel concentrate heavily on vineyards. For those of us who don't drink wine or have never set foot in a vineyard, these scriptures may seem inaccessible. But if we consider the tremendous importance of wine to the ancient world, we hear the scriptures asking us to make a life-or-death decision. Choosing death means forsaking our relationship with God and taking upon ourselves all the anxiety of faithlessness. Choosing life means paying attention to the kingdom of God on earth, striving to pursue "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious." Today's vineyard metaphors invite us to identify our highest priority in life and tend to it. If we ask, God will help us order our lives correctly so we are free to cultivate our vineyards in love.

CONNECTED TO TRADITION

The Church presents today's Old Testament and Gospel readings together, as a pair. We delight in the symmetry between the two passages. Jesus, who is the Word of God, knows the Hebrew scriptures by heart and intends for his parable to echo Isaiah. As Jesus begins speaking, he summons the words of Isaiah, knowing his learned audience of chief priests and elders will feel comfortable with a familiar scripture passage. These scholars recognize immediately that Jesus is referring to a prophetic passage about sin, about the chosen people's tendency to turn away from God and grow "wild."

AMAZED BY INNOVATION

What Jesus does next surprises his audience. He adds a new twist to Isaiah's well-known words, adding a new character, the landowner's very own son. Adding this innovation shows that Jesus confirms the prophet's warning—that God longs for "his cherished plant" to grow according to the divine plan. The narrative twist also allows Jesus to reveal the fullness of God's plan in a way his audience can understand. Like a master teacher, Jesus respects the knowledge and faithfulness of the chief priests and elders, and then builds on what they know. By adding the landowner's son to the parable of the vineyard, Jesus gently expresses his own mission as the Son of God. Matthew's Gospel often depicts the chief priests and elders as oppositional; they worry that Jesus will abolish the law and foment rebellion. As the Lord said earlier in Matthew's Gospel, however, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Jesus' audience is skeptical about him, horrified at the thought of a mere human being claiming that he is the Son of God. Jesus' masterful approach provides an opportunity for his audience to give him the benefit of the doubt. In this way, Jesus proposes—not imposes—his kingship, inviting us all to follow him.

Today's Readings: Is 5:1–7; Ps 80:9, 12, 13–14, 15–16, 19–20; Phil 4:6–9; Mt 21:33–43

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Sunday Readings
October 4, 2020
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Is 5:1–7

Let me now sing of my friend,
my friend's song concerning his vineyard.
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.

Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard:

What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I had not done?

Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes,
did it bring forth wild grapes?

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 briars;

I will command the clouds

not to send rain upon it.

The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah are his cherished plant;

he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed!

for justice, but hark, the outcry!

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 80:9, 12, 13–14, 15–16, 19–20

R. (Is 5:7a) The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

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.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Why have you broken down its walls,
so that every passer-by plucks its fruit,

The boar from the forest lays it waste,
and the beasts of the field feed upon it?

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

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.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

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.
R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Reading 2

Phil 4:6–9

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

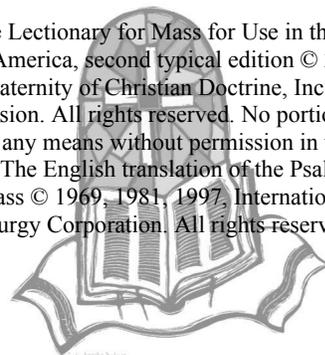
Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel

Mt 21:33–43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "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? 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."

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Prayer of the Faithful

Let us have no anxiety, but trust in God to hear these prayers that we offer today.

For Pope Francis and all Church leaders who show us how cultivate in the Church a fruitful harvest for the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.

For international collaboration and cooperation in developing treatments and vaccines for the coronavirus, let us pray to the Lord.

For a growing respect for the dignity of each and every human life, especially those at life's margins, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who go hungry every day, especially children in our cities and neighborhoods, let us pray to the Lord.

For greater awareness of the limitations of our natural resources, and for wisdom to be good stewards of all of nature's bounty, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19, and for all who have died, especially N., N., and N., let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

**O God,
you have put us in this vineyard
to do your work on earth.
Grant us the diligence and grace
to work faithfully until the end.
Graciously hear all these our prayers
through Christ our Lord.**

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