

Being A Good Tenant

If you have ever been a landlord or know someone who has a rental property, you know how challenging a *bad* tenant can be.

Bad tenants move in but refuse to move out. They are consistently late in paying their rent.

Sometimes they poke holes in the walls and clog the plumbing. They let the trash pile up.

Bad tenants have loud parties that disturb the other tenants.

What's more, when they move out, they leave behind a huge mess.

The parable in this Sunday's gospel is about bad tenants (Matthew 21:33-43).

The rental property is a vineyard. The rent to be paid is grapes.

The tenants not only refuse paying the rent, they mistreat the landlord's messengers.

These tenants get violent, they even kill the landlord's son.

In the end, the tenants forfeit the blessing of the vineyard. The vineyard is lost and handed over to others.

This story about the tenants in the vineyard is about us.

The "vineyard" is our world and the blessings that have been entrusted to our care:

- The blessing of a family and relationships of love;
- The blessing of a nation and hard-won freedoms;
- The blessing of a community of faith;
- The blessing of the good earth.

God is the "landlord." We are "tenants."

For the 70, 80 or 90 years of our lifespan, we are given a share in the responsibility of caring for the "vineyard." To each of us has been given a portion of the vineyard to cultivate.

Vineyards can thrive. They can also be neglected, even trashed. What was given as a "blessing" can be lost.

So,

Am I a good "tenant?" Have we been good tenants?

Have I really listened to the words of the landlord's son - Jesus? Have we rooted our lives in his wisdom?

Did I speak up when I witnessed an injustice inflicted upon a fellow tenant? Do we work for justice in the vineyard?

Am I merciful when mercy is what is required for healing? Have I been generous when I had the means to be generous?

What kind of a "vineyard" are we as "tenants" passing on to our children and grandchildren? Will another generation

curse us for having passed on a polluted, sick, and perhaps, dying planet?

How can we be better tenants?

These are good questions to ask. They are questions that the Divine Landlord will one day ask of us.

It would seem that the Christian vocation is to pass on our portion of the vineyard in *better* condition than when we first inherited it.

Let's pray for one another as fellow tenants:

At the end of each day and at the end our lives,
may we offer the good fruit of lives lived with
integrity and compassion
for the privilege of being heirs
to the vineyard.

Amen.

Fr. Steven Labaire