

## Vineyard Workers

Recently, a devastating fire destroyed an apartment complex nearby, displacing dozens of families.

Upon arriving at the scene, two firefighters rushed into the building to rescue two elderly women. Thankfully all four escaped unscathed.

The local news team focused on the two valiant firefighters, proclaiming them to be "heroes." The firefighters seemed more humble. "You may think we're heroes, but this is our work. This is what we do."

I've witnessed this scenario play out in other, less dramatic moments:

- The parishioner who daily checks in with his severely diabetic neighbor, assuring that his blood sugar levels are OK.

- The field hockey coach who noticed signs of physical abuse on one of her players, reported it, and followed through, making sure that the player had a safe place to go to.

- The volunteers who show up, rain or shine, at the Saint Francis Soup Kitchen, making sure everyone who needs a meal, gets one.

- The Eucharistic minister who brings Holy Communion weekly to an elderly shut-in who has no family. Literally no one...

When asked about what they do, they'll tell you simply: *"This is our work. This is what I'm called to do."*

All this goes to the heart of Sunday's gospel. Jesus tells a story: A father asks his first son to work in the family vineyard. The son at first says no, but changes his mind and gets working. The father asks his second son to help out as well. This son says: *Yes! I sure will!* But he never goes (Matthew 21: 28-32)

Jesus then asks: "Who did the will of the father? Of course, the one who eventually went to work, not the one who simply gave his dad "lip-service."

The point is simple: Authentic faith is not measured by lip-service but by *life-service*.

Jesus knows that words can be "cheap." They can be cheap in our families, in politics and in the church.

Trendy bumper stickers,  
colorful slogans posted on front lawns,  
attention-grabbing Facebook posts,  
eloquent homilies,  
and rousing campaign speeches,  
  
are all *words*.

Words run the risk of being hollow when not backed up by actions.

Our Father is calling each of us to work in the vineyard of our world. And our Father asks us: Will we work with our hands for the things we pray for with our lips?

A very wise abbot once shared with me this insight:

*If you think about it, it's a goal.*

*If you talk about it, it may be a possibility.*

*But if you put it in your schedule, it starts to become **real**.*

Let's pray that we all find our place to work in our Father's vineyard -

a place where words truly bear fruit,

souls drink of compassion,

and grace is savored.

*Amen.*

*Fr. Steven Labaire*