

**Gospel Verse**  
**October 5, 2008**

**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.”**

■ **Mt. 21:42-43**

What a powerful practical message today. And he’s telling us how we can do the one thing that St. Paul says, ‘Oh, don’t worry. Have no anxiety about anything’. We look at Paul and say, ‘Are you crazy?’ He says, ‘No, I’m dead serious’. And we look at him again and say, ‘No, we live in the age of anxiety. We are just filled with anxiety. We are worried about a thousand different things. We have a war that doesn’t seem to ever end. There are communist countries collapsing around us. Our houses are being foreclosed. We don’t know which way is up. Of course we’re anxious!’ He says, ‘You don’t need to be’. And Jesus shows us how not to be.

It was taught to me many years ago, and I will share it with you at the end of this homily, how it had to be done by people who really have nothing because they had everything. They were the poorest congregation I ever (inaudible) in my life. (inaudible) Hopkins Park who, materially, had very little but would worry about next to nothing. I used to stand in amazement until I understood what this gospel is trying to teach us. This is an amazing gospel and it’s following the same parabolic pattern that we learned in the last few weeks. Paul’s (inaudible). Jesus tells him a story. It’s about someone else and he’s sucked right into the story. Then he asks him a question. (inaudible) is a window. But now it becomes a question to us. And when we answer the question it becomes (inaudible). And the question to us today is -- Are we courageous and faith-filled enough to look in the mirror? Because sometimes we might not like to see what looks back to us.

It’s a wonderful, wonderful mirror that if we can honestly look at it, and respond in the right way, it sets us free and relieves us of anxiety. That doesn’t mean there’s not going to be tension in our life. As a matter of fact, we are called to be ‘tension bearers’. But anxiety is different than holding tension and bearing tension. Anxiety is always -- I want answers -- I want...It’s always, always unfinished and unsettled because we are trying to do it ourselves.

Today’s gospel is wonderful. It is clear who is in charge from the beginning. We are told it is the master of the universe. It is God. He is the owner of the vineyard.

The storyteller is trying to tell us as clearly as he can, this one digs the pit, sets up the hedge, builds the tower, (inaudible) the wine press. This is his vineyard. And then he gives it to the tenants, Stewarts. And he says, ‘You work it and you participate in it but I’m going to come back for my produce, my part’. He comes back, sends the servants back and, of course the tenants... and this is where we go soft...the tenants have this little disease. We all have this same disease. We want it all. We want it all. We want to possess it. We want to own it. We want to have it. It’s...what’s the second word the child learns after the word ‘no’? MINE!. Mine. And, of course, the tenants are tenants. They are not the owners. They see the servants coming and they are hiding in the grapes their (inaudible) percentage of the grapes. And what do they do? They manhandle one. They stone another. They kill another. And the interpretation of this scripture it’s the (inaudible) of the based on more profits and they do exactly the same with them. And then, of course, Jesus is now speaking about himself. The father says, “I will send my son. Surely they will respect my son.” That’s from the father’s perspective, the owner’s perspective. To give them a life(?). And what are the people thinking? Kill the son! And then there’s no one left to inherit the land. (inaudible)

Desire, possession and greed is always going lead to riots. There are two things that Jesus is constantly (inaudible) us – greed and violence. And we don't preach about it very much. Our economy is based on it. Our way of life is based on it. It's the possession of the things we think we can't live without, we have to have that will always lead to whether it's land or oil...and the new one is water. Do not be surprised if we try to build a wall around Lake Michigan in the next 30 years. It's ours! It's mine! And it's mortal. It will kill you. Why? It cuts you off from the source, from the wellspring, from the Artesian well, from the source of God's goodness. God wants us to participate in everything. It's all ours to enjoy. But to own – nothing. It's not our success. Mine. Mine.

"Have you ever heard that the stone that the builder's rejected has become the cornerstone?" What we have done is we rejected the cornerstone. What is the cornerstone of our life? All monistic(?) religions believe in exactly the same thing. Judaism, Christianity, Islam all believe in exactly the same thing. (inaudible) There's only one God. And everything else, including ourselves and all that you think we have in the relative eyes in relationship to that wine, to that (inaudible) to that God.

(inaudible) and look in the mirror and say, 'No, we don't want to possess it. And possessing it is killing us.' Why? We cut ourselves off from the source. We cut ourselves off from the wellspring. We cut ourselves off from the giver of life. This should be absolutely obviously to you that we don't own anything. We're not talking rocket science. Anyone who's experienced birth and death knows, right from the beginning, that we're not a mutual (inaudible), that we don't own anything. That's all a gift. It's all grace.

This is what it means to be a tenant or, to use our modern language, a Stewart. I'll be talking about stewardship during the month of October. And we have a very poor understand of stewardship. If there's anything I want you to understand, as a parish, is what it means to be a Stewart. It is the most liberating thing in the world. You know why? You don't have to own anything and you can enjoy everything.

Be honest – isn't it more fun to go on a boat ride on somebody else's boat than to own your own and fix it up all the time? You don't have to own it. You can enjoy it. It's not yours. It's not mine. (inaudible). What causes our anxiety is always the fear of loosing what we think we have – of our possessions. Whether that possession be a boat or a house or a car or a person...or a relationship. We're so anxious that we're going to lose it and it was never ours in the first place. If you come to the realization that it wasn't yours you could enjoy it. So the (inaudible) Hopkins Park. (inaudible).

I was amazed. Poor blacks never committed suicide. (inaudible) I said how do you do that? He said, 'Father it's impossible to kill yourself jumping out of a basement flat'. (inaudible) You got nothing to lose. And when you realize that everything is from somewhere else you can enjoy everything you got.

I thanked God that I woke up in my right mind this morning. Isn't that amazing – that I woke up in my right mind? I am grateful for that. St. Paul says you will have no anxiety when you have gratitude for everything. Everything is a gift. You own nothing. Enjoy it. Whatever you get, give it away. The moment you get something, give it away. (inaudible) And then you'll never (inaudible) about missing it. I said, 'Oh, well that makes sense'.

There was only one thing that I lusted after as a very young man. This was in the early 70s. I wanted a Volkswagen Beetle. I got one. Someone gave me an older '62 or '63 Volkswagen Beetle and I loved my Volkswagen Beetle. That was mine. And I remember the way you fixed things back then was if it made a noise you just turned the radio a little louder. It was fine. I remember one day driving back from (inaudible) to (inaudible) Park. It's after the 7:00 mass. I was a young seminarian. I said, 'I don't hear a noise but I smell something.' He said, 'I smell something too'. He said, 'What's it smell like?' I said, 'I think it smells like gas.' I said would you look back there and see what you can see? He said I think I see a hole. I said, 'I think we'd better get out'. We stopped the car and got out. And the moment we got out – KABOOM! The whole car went up in flames. Destroyed. I got to the church. He brought me to the church. I said, 'Guess what?' They said, 'What?' I said, 'My beloved Volkswagen is gone!' The said, 'Oh, that's so sad Father'. I said, 'No, it's not – it wasn't mine'. Do you get it? No anxiety. It wasn't mine in the first place.

What are you clinging to? What are you holding onto? What do you have to possess? Put it back into the hands of the one who already owns it. And there's no anxiety over losing it because it wasn't yours in the first place.

When we learn that. When we have the courage to hold that mirror up to our face because we are in a world that is obsessed with possessions, when we learn that marvelous lesson of St. Paul and Jesus we're free. We have no tie. You are (inaudible) anxiety and (inaudible).