

## 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

*Matthew 21.33–43*

*Become a Saint*

One aspect of our Catholic faith that non-Catholics don't always understand is **our devotion to the saints**. We do not worship saints. We worship God alone. But we do ask the saints to pray for us. They are alive with Christ in heaven ... and just as we ask one another, here on earth, to pray for us, we ask our saints to pray for us as well. But our devotion to the saints includes another important dimension. The saints show us **in concrete terms what it means to follow Christ and to live an abundant life**. They are the all-star Catholics, if you will—the models of how to apply our faith to the confusing and challenging moments of ordinary life. And this connects beautifully with the image Jesus gives us in today's Gospel. Jesus speaks about a vineyard that has been entrusted to others, and he speaks about the fruit that the owner expects that vineyard to produce. **The saints are precisely those men and women whose lives produced that fruit**. God entrusted them with his vineyard—their lives, their gifts, their opportunities, their joys and even their sufferings—and they allowed his grace to bear fruit through them. And that same vineyard has now been entrusted to **us**. God has given each one of us a life. And he wants that life to bear fruit.

St. Paul acknowledges this in today's Second Reading when he says: *"Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."* In other words: **look at the example of a holy life—and imitate it**. Imagine someone coming into this church right now and conducting a survey, asking each of us the same question: **"What do you want to be the most?"** Think for a moment about how you would answer. How many of us would say: **"I want to be a saint"**? Probably not enough of us. And perhaps that's because we don't really understand the saints.

When we think about saints, some of us probably imagine someone... who spends all their time praying, who is out of touch with reality, who never has any fun, who lives a boring life, who wouldn't understand life's **real** problems and struggles. Not true at all! **Holiness doesn't make us less human; holiness alone makes us fully human!** Holiness is not about escaping ordinary life. **Holiness happens right in the middle of ordinary life**. It is forgiving when we would rather hold a grudge. It is being patient with our family when we are tired. It is choosing honesty when dishonesty would be easier. It is falling into sin, turning back to Christ, going to Confession, getting up, and beginning again. That is where saints are made.

St. Paul tells us today that *"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* And then he tells us where to set those hearts and minds: on whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, whatever is excellent, and whatever is worthy of praise. **That is the road of holiness**. The saints, through their example of heartfelt prayer, humble reception of the sacraments, love of neighbour, sacrifice, forgiveness, and perseverance, show us how to walk that road—**no matter what may come**. They show us how to live lives filled with meaning, peace, and fruitfulness for the world around us.

Pope Benedict 16th once said that ... *holiness is not a luxury or a privilege reserved for a few extraordinary people. It is the common destiny of God's children—the universal vocation of all the baptized*. In other words, **sainthood is not for somebody else**. It is for you. It is for me. **The only worthwhile goal in life is to become a saint**. Because to become a saint is ultimately to become the person God created us to be. And today's Gospel reminds us that God has entrusted each of us with A vineyard. Our life. Our family. Our gifts. Our opportunities. Our faith. And one day, the Lord will look for the fruit that our lives have produced.

Today, God is inviting us to choose that goal for ourselves. And if we already have, he is inviting us **to choose it again**. **Holiness is God's plan for our lives**. **So let us leave this church today with one ambition above every other: ... to belong completely to Christ, to bear fruit with our lives, and when this life is over ... to be numbered among his saints**.