

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parable in today's Gospel is a parable of salvation history. William Barclay's commentary on this parable reminds us that "in interpreting a parable it is normally a first principle that every parable has only one point and that the details are not to be stressed. Normally to try to find a meaning for every detail is to make the mistake of treating the parable as an allegory. But in this case it is different. In this parable the details do have a meaning..."

In this parable, the landowner is God. The vineyard is the people of Israel. The tenants are the leaders of the people. The servants of the landowner are the Old Testament prophets, who were often persecuted and killed. The Son is Jesus. In this parable, then, Jesus summarizes the history of Israel and prophesies his own death and the beginning of the Church.

When we think of prophets, even biblical prophets, we often think of people who predict the future. However, the role of the Old Testament prophets was not to predict the future but to interpret the present and challenge the people. True prophets almost inevitably make people uncomfortable.

We need to realize that God sends prophets both to us personally and to the Church. This parable, then, offers a cautionary tale to us. For example, on one occasion when Jesus was rejected by his listeners, he said, "*A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house*" [Mt. 13:57]. This was Jesus' way of saying that familiarity often breeds contempt. When we know someone's limitations, weaknesses, and even faults, we do not want to be challenged by them. Likewise, we need to realize that God can and does call us to be prophets to others, and sometimes we are unwilling because we know our own limitations, weaknesses, and faults.

This is a challenging time in the Church. Right now there are so many different voices in the Church trying to tell us what we should think and believe and do. I do not know about you, but I am often very frustrated with all these different voices. I think one of the reasons Pope Francis has called the synod on synodality is to be the Church in a very old yet very new way. In the world in which we are living, where everyone has an opinion and a platform, I think he understands that we need to listen to many different voices but more importantly listen to the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the New Testament, the Church is referred to as a building. At the end of this parable, Jesus reminds us that he is the cornerstone of the Church. St. Paul wrote that the Church is "*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets...*" [Eph. 2:20]. St. Peter calls us to be like living stones to "*be built into a spiritual house...*" [1 Pet. 2:5]. That Christ is the cornerstone of the Church, that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and that we are the living stones who make up the Church should give us great hope for the future. I believe this Synod will be prophetic.

My brothers and sisters, everything we see on the news or read tells us that so many people, especially young people, are suffering from anxiety. There are all kinds of reasons for this anxiety. I will confess lots of things make me anxious. For so many people, this anxiety is debilitating. This anxiety is so debilitating for so many people that they need medical treatment. We also know that the rate of suicide has skyrocketed for young people.

However, in today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Paul offers one help for dealing with anxiety. He invites us to ask God for what we need while thanking God for what we have. He invites us to entrust our lives and our futures to God and to Christ. If we do, he promises that "*the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*"