

Scripture for October 5, 2008

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

“Vineyards “

Perhaps you have noticed that the scriptural readings of recent Sundays have been about vineyards. Two weeks ago we heard about the landowner who hired men to work in his vineyard at different times during the day and paid all of them the same wage. Last Sunday it was the man who asked his two sons to work in his vineyard. One said yes and the other said no. In today’s Gospel we see a landowner who leases his vineyard to some tenants and in our first reading from the Prophet Isaiah (5:1-7) we discover a beautiful poem about a vineyard. It begins:

“My friend had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside;
spaded it, cleared it of stones,
and planted the choicest vines...”

A number of years ago I lived in California and made several driving trips up into the wine country. It was awesome! Imagine the rolling hills covered with miles of parallel rows of vines. They look like an army marching in formation. See each vine, hundreds of thousands of them, growing vertically on a stake or trellis, up onto a wire above. It is a wonderful sight! So much care goes into a vineyard, so much commitment; so much

pouring out of time and energy and certainly love goes into the nurturing of a vineyard.

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On a fertile hillside;
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And planted the choicest
vines...”



The Well

*A Center for our
Sacred Unity with God,
Earth, and One
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The vineyard in this poem refers to the House of Israel upon which its friend Yahweh has lavished much care, commitment and love. There are, of course, other vineyards. One is located deep within each of us. It is my inner-self and your inner-self. Your inner-self is that sacred place where you are working out your Yes to life and your Yes to God. This vineyard requires your commitment and love, especially in our consumer culture that pushes us to live superficially and materially rather than deeply and spiritually. You are loving this vineyard at this Eucharist as you place your inner-self on the altar to be blessed and transformed.

Another vineyard is your family/friends-self...the first circle out from your inner-self. It is a place, a sacred set of relationships, where you are working out your Yes to life and your Yes to God. This vineyard requires your commitment and love, especially at the beginning of the

21st century when many of our close relationships are under stress from a culture of individualism and competitiveness that looks out only for “el numero uno”. You are loving this vineyard at this Eucharist as you place your family/friends-self on the altar to be blessed and transformed.

Another vineyard – the next circle out – is your church-self. This vineyard, this set of relationships, is a sacred place where you are working out your Yes to life and your Yes to God. This vineyard also requires your commitment and love, especially at this time of the clerical child abuse crisis and at this time when hierarchical pronouncements coming down from on high are a problem for many. You are loving this vineyard at this Eucharist as you place your church-self on the altar to be blessed and transformed.

Another vineyard – the next circle out – is your national-self. This vineyard, this set of relationships, is a sacred place where you are working out your Yes to life and your Yes to God. This vineyard requires your commitment and love, especially at this time for the USA with its severe financial crisis and its important up-coming national elections. You are loving this vineyard at this Eucharist as you place your national-self on the altar to be blessed and transformed.

Another vineyard – the next circle out – is your Earth-self. This vineyard, this set of relationships, is a sacred place where you are working out your Yes to life and your Yes to God.

This vineyard requires your commitment and love, especially at this time of Earth's withering, a withering that involves global warming, the disrupting and diminishing of the web of life, and many other pathological conditions. You are loving this vineyard at this Eucharist as you place your Earth-self on the altar to be blessed and transformed.

Finally - the outermost circle - is the vineyard that is your Universe-self. It contains all your other selves. It is a sacred place within you that houses the magnificence of 13.7 billion years of the Universe's unfolding. It is that place within you that is the Universe's way of knowing itself. To have a Universe-self is to be gifted and this gift calls out to each of us to contribute to a cosmic nurturing and loving.

All of these vineyards, all of these selves, constitute the totality of who we are; constitute the complete you and the complete me that God loves. All of them are present in each of us at this moment and every moment. Let us care for them, attend to them, commit ourselves to them and learn to love them.

These selves are all sacred places, places where the Divine is embedded... places where, according to today's Gospel, if good grapes are produced, the Reign of God will be unfolding... in abundance...overflowing...rushing up on you and me and everyone and everything that exists ...so that the whole Creation will never be the same again!

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