

Homily 28th Sunday 8/10/17

When we look at today's gospel, in which Jesus is clearly echoing the message of Isaiah, and applying it to His own age all those centuries later, we can miss the fact that we too have to apply this teaching to our own lives today. Through this parable, Jesus was obviously talking about all the prophets who had come to the people and been badly treated, and how in the end God had sent his Son who would be killed by a disbelieving world. But like Jesus did with his own people then, we have to apply this message to our own lives. Yes, we can apply it to the Church – Jesus has promised that ultimately the Church will not go astray, but that doesn't mean we should just sit on our laurels. We have to be aware that perhaps WE are not fully implementing God's word and message at a communal level – parish, diocese and Church. Because there's always the threat of loss in the promise of the word. But I think we really have to look at the message of this parable and apply it to our own lives.

We should spiritually listen to the word and say, what does this mean for me, because if my body – myself is the vineyard, which is meant to produce fruit, then we CAN say, if we discern and listen and look, that there are many messengers, many prophets sent to us today. Sometimes it's in good events or bad events – sometimes in people we adore and trust and are our friends, and sometimes the message comes from people we don't particularly like. In fact, I always think it's worth going away when somebody you didn't particularly like said or did something, or you experienced an event that was bad for you, and pray about it – is there something in this that God can turn to good? Sometimes we hear a message from someone else and we withdraw from it – and yet it's on the ball, it hits the spot, it's about me – and it's about me changing and producing fruit - and if we don't we may miss the very message of Jesus.

I had quite a simple revelation while I was on holiday in Washington. I went to a Safeway supermarket, and discovered there were three armed guards permanently on duty. I thought later we do the same thing – I know I do – we put armed guards on our life. We'd rather go the 'safeway' to God rather than the difficult way. We often want the safeway to God – but the messages we get, the prophets that are sent to us, are often found in the difficult way.