**27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 4, 2026**

Isaiah 5:1-7 - The Lord compares the house of Israel to a vineyard.
Philippians 4:6-9 – St. Paul encourages all to stay faithful to the teaching they received from him.
Matthew 21:33-43 - **When What We Have Becomes Who We Are.**

**This is Mine**: Watch a little child when another child reaches for his/her toy. Most often, almost instinctively, the child pulls the toy closer; it's like saying, "Mine!" This is one of the first words we learn. And, strangely enough, we probably never completely outgrow this attitude. As adults, our "mine" simply becomes more sophisticated: my house, my money, my job, my success, my body, my time, my position, my reputation, my family, my ministry, my church. Sometimes I hear myself also saying these things: my meal, my vocation, my priesthood, my father, my mother, my time, my religious order, my parish, etc.

Sometimes we carry this attitude into other situations in our lives. Someone questions the way we do something at work, and we immediately become defensive: "This is my responsibility." Someone suggests a change in our parish ministry, and we think, "But I have been doing this for many years." Technically, these ideas sound alright and true. Now when we face a challenge in life; lose someone very close, lose a job, lose a position, or an achievement that we worked hard for, and suddenly we wonder, '**Who am I now?'**. A financial setback comes, and it is not only our bank account that feels threatened; our sense of security is also shaken. Even in our relationships, we can say, "My spouse, my son, my daughter, my children, my family, my plans," ***and slowly we forget that the people we love are also gifts entrusted to us***. And that God has a hand in every position, and in every achievement that we call 'mine'.

The deeper challenge is moving from "This is mine" to "**This is me**." We begin to measure our worth by what we own, what we accomplish, what positions we hold, or how others see us. When something is taken away from us, we can feel as though a piece of ourselves has been taken with it. This explains why gratitude can be so difficult. We are not only afraid of losing things; sometimes we are afraid of losing the identity those things give us.

**Entrusted, Not Owned (Matthew 21:33-43).** This is the heart of today's gospel passage. The tenants are given a vineyard to care for, but they begin to act as though the vineyard belongs to them. They forget that they are stewards, not the owners. They are mangers/CEOs, not the landlords; they are occupants and not the creator of the vineyard. And that is the temptation Jesus places before us today: **to take what God has entrusted to us and begin to call it "mine."**

The gospel today reminds us of a deeper truth: Before I own anything, before I achieve anything, before I hold any position, before anyone recognizes me - **I belong to God.** So our family, our parents, our children, our grandchildren, our money, time, talents and treasures, abilities, relationships, opportunities, work, ministry, and even life itself ***are gifts placed in our hands***. We are receivers before we are owners. We are accountable for all that God, in his love, has entrusted to us, including our own lives.

Let us cultivate a grateful heart and make a daily habit of telling God and others how God has blessed us. No matter how difficult life's journey may be, we can still find reasons to praise God for His blessings, past, present, and future. Give thanks to God for all you are and for all you have.

Today is the feast of St Francis of Assisi. He lived with simplicity, poverty, and deep love for God's creation. He did not treat the world as something to possess selfishly, but as God's gift to receive with gratitude and care for responsibly. His life produced the fruits of peace, humility, simplicity, compassion, and love. At the end of this Mass, we will pray for the kids and bless all their stuffed animals, including photos of the real animals at home. St. Francis reminds us that holiness does not consist in possessing more vineyard, but in loving more, serving more, and receiving God's gifts with gratitude.

Friends, the question is not simply, "What do I have?" but "What have I allowed to define me?" This matters because before anything we possess, achieve, or become, one truth stands: **we belong to God**. So let us move from ownership to gratitude, from "mine" to "gift," and from "What do I have?" to the deeper question: "Whose am I?" Yes, I am God's son, God's daughter.

May we live not only to receive His blessings, but also turn them into blessings for others. May our lives become a fruitful vineyard with fruits of love, justice, forgiveness, humility, honesty, and holiness, care for the poor and the vulnerable, treating others with respect and dignity. May our faith to become visible in the way we live. Amen.

**Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP**