

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Homily

Love's troubles, love's complexities, unrequited love, spurned love, the pains of love, the joys of love, and the misunderstandings of love. All these things have shaped the human imagination almost since time began.

We think of spurned Roderigo in Shakespeare's "Othello," the classic tale of star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet; the haunting arias of Bizet's "Carmen"; the tragic love story of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*; the desperation of Bridget Jones, and the tales of love found and lost in every genre of popular music from bubbly pop to gritty rock.

The Bible itself offers a tragic tale of love spurned. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob hears the complaints of his people against their Egyptian masters, comes to their rescue and makes with them a covenant of enduring fidelity. But then unfolds the sorry tale of generations of failure and apostasy, followed again and again by a rejected and suffering God reaching out to an obtuse and stiff-necked people.

We hear echoes of the story in the poetry of Isaiah: *What more could I have done for my people that I have not already done? When I looked for it to yield grapes, behold, it yielded wild grapes.* And we hear the story taken up again by Jesus in the gospel parable of the tenants in the vineyard who turn out to be traitors.

Both readings reflect the particular history of the people of Israel, but they also reflect the history of the whole human race. They tell of the terrible ingratitude of humanity to God. In the face of all his love, all his miracles, in the face of everything that he has accomplished, we remain unmoved and self-centred.

God created a beautiful wonderful world, fenced it with his might and his providence, prepared everything in it so that it could be the place of God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of love and joy. But people have made the world a place where there is bloodshed, where inhuman, cruel acts are committed.

From generation to generation the Lord has sent his messengers: the patriarchs, the prophets, the angels; and finally he came himself to remind us that the world was created for love. And as in the parable, mankind led the son – the incarnate Son of God - out of the vineyard and killed him.

But it's more personal than that. *We* are the workers in the vineyard, who so often push Christ away. When he visits our lives we say: *I want to be the God, the master. I want to manage everything.* Perhaps not so directly, but more subtly in our actions and decisions. In response to everything that God has done for us - creating us, revealing himself to us, pouring out all his love on us and finally giving us the life and death of his Son, we produce hardly anything but a brief "thank you" and move on. We profess our faith but reject the teachings of Christ and put up barriers to keep his love out.

Both readings also remind us starkly what the *consequences* of spurning God's love will be. We are saved because God loves us; but not by the love of God only, but by our **response** to his love. If we want to reap the fruits of the Cross, of the saving death of Jesus Christ, but return nothing to God, then we *exclude* ourselves from the Kingdom of God.

The Good News is that God persistently keeps on coming back over and over again, longing for us to embrace the Kingdom of God, willing us to hand over our hearts to him, but will not – *can* not – *make* us love him. Like a spurned lover he is prepared to wait and wonder: *What more could I do for you that I have not already done?*