

## Homily - Y 27A - October 8, 2017

“The Kiss of Death” is a term I use about me and my relationship with plants, flowers, in fact, with anything that grows. It’s a well-deserved reputation, one that I readily admit. One Christmas season, I was struck by the beauty of a Christmas cactus. When I heard the word cactus, I figured that a cactus can grow in a desert and doesn’t need much attention. Happily I can report that I found a friend in Christmas cactus. I tell this story because whenever scripture uses images of plants, flowers or crops, I feel very guilty. But, today, we hear through stories about another kind of life, human life.

We just heard two readings speaking about growing and harvests and reaping. In the first reading, Isaiah’s portrays God as the owner of the vineyard. God has done all the right things to produce good grapes, but the result of the harvest is wild grapes, not good ones. In other words, God has given life and has cultivated life, but life did not result.

The gospel tells the story of a very successful vineyard. The managers of the vineyard were supposed to pay rent to the landowner, but refused to do so. They were successful in cultivating the life of the grapes, but misused their success and killed the owner’s servants and son so that they did not have to share the fruits of their labor.

It is clear in our scriptures that God is the author of life, the giver of life. We, on the other hand, are the stewards of life. Life is a gift entrusted to us, and, just like any gift, we are expected to take this gift and encourage its growth. Nurture life, encourage life, strengthen life, and, like the grapes, bring life to fruition.

The stewards of life in today’s readings were not good stewards. In the first reading, they were jealous of the life that was given and decided to destroy it. In the second, they were greedy and had to get rid of the people with whom they were supposed to share.

Every year, October is Respect Life month, and we are reminded about the sacredness of human life from the moment of its conception until natural death. The stories in today’s scriptures are not stories about grapes, but stories about human life. The destruction of life that occurs in the scriptures occurs even in our own day.

Pope John Paul II wrote a document entitled *The Gospel of Life*. In that document, he underscores the sacredness of human life created by

God and reminds us about our obligation to be good stewards and cultivate and nurture human life.

But how good have we been? We have allowed abortion to become the law of the land. Some subscribe to the false notion that humans can decide who may live and who may not. God gave us human life endowed with dignity, but so many have chosen to manipulate life to fulfill selfish desires. God has given us human intellect to build up and enhance life, but so many often look for ways to control, manipulate, or even end human life. God has given us a heart to love life, to love others, but we have often chosen to end the lives of others, especially those not yet born, the most vulnerable of all human life.

This month presents us with an opportunity to renew our commitment to life, our commitment to be good stewards of what God has given us, to rediscover the beauty of life, to nurture and cherish life rather than to destroy, manipulate, or misuse life.

Daily, for example, there is an opportunity from noon to 1 pm to pray in front of Planned Parenthood, a leading provider of abortions. We pray that all might rediscover the beauty and sacredness of human life and never forget how precious is the gift of human life.

May we resolve to protect life, to reverence life, and, above all, never to hurt or abuse human life.