

From the Desk Of Fr. John

Right to Life...is just that...a right that must be protected and promoted. As Catholic Christians we believe that life is a sacred gift from God and we are created in His image. We also accept the fact that life begins at conception and must be protected from conception until natural death.

We join together with thousands across the country this Sunday in a 'Life Chain' to witness our belief and our convictions about life. We witness to others and call them to reflect on this precious gift and pray they will move to also protect and preserve life from its very beginning. Join in the witness today!

The harvest is ready and the workers are desperately needed. It was a real experience in Napa Valley several years ago when the weather was about to change and the grapes were at their peak. Harvesting was to happen now...or the crop would be lost!

We heard that desperation when the generous landowner went out to hire laborers to gather the harvest in the Gospel Parable of last Sunday. The image that Jesus painted was the urgency of the ingathering...as well as the generosity of the landowner to those who joined in the gathering. Another truth behind the story is also the reality that we don't earn the kingdom, but that it is given as a gift...like the generosity of the landowner. But do we feel that urgency of the harvest or the necessity of joining in the labor to gather it now?

The image is of the final gathering into the kingdom and how important it is to invite all to participate and to share in that kingdom. We are to be the gatherers. We are all to call and invite others into that kingdom. Will we carry out our duties and extend that welcome?

The scene moves to a more personal family setting today. It is a scene of a dad with his two sons. It is not the story of the Prodigal Son but it has some very important lessons about responding in obedience to the will of the Father. It is a parable that Jesus proposes to religious leaders of which He also invites a

response...which He will use to reflect upon their attitudes and behavior.

The Father in Jesus' story is asking his sons to go and work in the vineyard. One of the sons says no at first...but then changes his mind and does go and work. The other son says yes...but never goes. Then Jesus poses the question to the religious leaders as to which of the sons 'Did the Father's will.'

Jesus had created the story to comment on the challenge these leaders had posed about the validity of the ministry and preaching of John the Baptist, which they basically had rejected. John the Baptist...who was sent by God...came preaching repentance and calling all to turn in obedience to God's will. So when the leaders gave their answer they had to admit that the first son had actually been the obedient one...even though he had at first said no. Now Jesus can draw the comparison and make the point.

The tax collectors and other sinners readily responded to John's call...(they were like the first son who said no...but changed his mind)...their hearts were changed, they had repented and they now...did the Father's will. The leaders, on the other hand, did not listen to John...nor did they think they needed to repent...they were like the second son who said yes...but ended up not responding to the will of the Father.

The religious leaders were very involved in temple worship and talked a good game...but were they really living the Father's will...doing and putting into action the real meaning of their religious ceremonies?

At the end of every Mass we are dismissed by the priest or the deacon... 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.' It is a sending-forth to live our faith and witness it to others. We must undergo regular conversion so we don't fall into the trap of the religious leaders of Jesus' day.