

27th Sunday Year A

I wanted to begin today's homily with something like this "My friend had a 401K that he invested. He planted a hedge fund around it and waited for it to bring forth good returns." I was thinking about it but then I don't have a clue as to markets and shorting and hedge funds. Although I did google hedge funds and came up with this:

"Hedge funds are investment pools that are relatively unconstrained in what they do. They are relatively unregulated (for now), charge very high fees, will not necessarily give you your money back when you want it, and will generally not tell you what they do. They are supposed to make money all the time, and when they fail at this, their investors redeem and go to someone else who has recently been making money. Every three or four years, they deliver a one-in-a-hundred-year flood." (Sounds like wild grapes to me.)

What I do know is what I can see of the pain, distress, anger, panic that is affecting so many people in our country as they see what they could trust, the financial system needing to be bailed out because of human greed and manipulation.

Why even bring this up? Because I hope you can see a relationship with the scriptures today. They are about first about trust, a breakdown of that trust and the breakthrough that is God's work (with our help.)

In the first reading today the vineyard is a symbol of a sacred trust between God and the people of Israel. The relationship of the vineyard to the owner of the vineyard is one of care, tending, cultivation. By rights everything should turn out beautifully... but in this case there is the opposite outcome. What is cared for brings forth chaos. What is sacred is desecrated. The Gospel too uses the same image although the vineyard's owner is more distant than in

the Isaiah passage. Here too the “tenants,” those entrusted with the care of the vineyard (use your own economic imagination) turn out to be only interested in what they can get for themselves. The ensuing image is of a blood bath. Not a pretty sight. The illusion in both the Isaiah reading and the Gospel is that human greed, mismanagement, betrayal of trust destroy what God has planted. There is a complete breakdown of the whole system of relationship with God and with the human community.

But aha! Where we human beings have a penchant for breaking down (in many senses of that word) God's penchant is for **BREAKTHROUGH**. It is what makes someone or something sacred in the first place. Something is set aside because GOD, the divine spirit has broken through this time, this place, this person who beholds it. God's action in the world is to restore but God can not do it alone without our co-operation. God needs human hands and human hearts to recreate, to rebuild, to plant, to tend, to care, to work in the vineyard.

Last week I preached about the new vineyard in which I'm working, which is St Mary of the Angels parish in Roxbury. After the Mass a new parishioner came to me and said: Father I'm out of work for a while. Is there anything I can do to help you in this new vineyard. I think since he volunteered his time, he has spent almost three days working in my other vineyard, rebuilding, renovating, surprising me with his generosity. Where I was having a breakdown over some things that needed to be done, he created a breakthrough for me.

Paul says "dismiss anxiety from your minds." He tells us that somehow the experience of Jesus Christ is key for understanding the **BREAKTHROUGH** of God into all our human experiences. This Jesus knew betrayal of trust. He knew the chaos, the havoc and yet his trust in God superseded the tearing apart of the fabric of his life. It's why we are here following him, gathered around

this table. He is our cornerstone, our rock. We can invest in him the way he has invested in us.