

## **9<sup>TH</sup> WEEK IN ORD TIME YEAR A**

**June 1-6: June 1 Monday: St, Justin, Martyr:**

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-justin-martyr/> **Mk 12:1-**

**12:** 1 *And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. ...*

**The context:** Told by Jesus during Passover week, the parable of the wicked tenants is actually an allegorical "*parable of judgment*," accusing the Pharisees of not producing the fruits of repentance and renewal of life which God expected from them as leaders of His Chosen people. "*I expected my vineyard to yield good grapes. Why did it yield sour ones instead?*" The parable also explains the necessity of our bearing fruit in our Christian life and the punishment for sterility and wickedness.

The meaning of the parable: As an allegory, this parable has different meanings. Like the Jews, the second- and third-generation Christians also understood God as the landlord. The servants sent by the landowner represented the prophets of the Old Testament. They were to see that God's chosen people produced fruits of justice, love, and righteousness. But the people refused to listen to the prophets and produced the bitter grapes of injustice, immorality, and idolatry. Further, they persecuted and killed the prophets. As a final attempt, the landowner sent his son, (Jesus), to collect the rent (fruits of righteousness), from the wicked tenants (the Jews). But they crucified him and continued to lead lives of disloyalty and disobedience. Hence, God's vineyard was to be taken away from His Chosen People and given to a people (Gentile Christians), who would then be expected to produce the fruit of righteousness. The parable warns us that if we refuse to reform our lives and to become productive, we also could be replaced as the old Israel was replaced by the "new" Israel.

**Life messages:** 1) We need to be good fruit-producers in the vineyard of the Church. Jesus has given the Church everything necessary to make Christians fruit-bearing: a) the Bible to know the will of God; b) the priesthood to bring us the Sacraments, and to lead the people in God's ways; c) the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the remission of sins; d) the Holy Eucharist as our spiritual food with the Sacrament of *Holy Orders* to continue the Priesthood of Jesus on earth until the end of time; e) the Sacrament of Confirmation for a dynamic life of Faith; f) the Sacrament of Matrimony for the sharing of love in families, the fundamental unit of the Church, and g) the Sacrament of Anointing to bring healing to the soul, and sometimes to the body if God wills. We are expected to make use of these gifts and so to produce fruits for God.

**2) We need to be good fruit-producers in the vineyard of our family.** By mutually sharing our blessings, by sacrificing time, treasure, and talents for the welfare of all the members, by humbly and lovingly serving others in the family, by recognizing and encouraging each other and by honoring and gracefully obeying our parents, we become producers of "*good fruit*" or good vine-branches in our families.

**June 2 Tuesday: Sts Marcellinus and Peter, Martyrs :** For a short biography, click <https://franciscanmedia.org/saint-pf-the-day-saints-marcellinus-and-peter-martyrs/> **Mk 12: 13-17:** *13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to entrap him in his talk. 14 And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? 15 ...17*

**The context:** Today's Gospel describes how Jesus ingeniously escaped from a trap set for him by the Pharisees. **The tax issue:** The Jews were forced to pay three separate taxes to the Roman emperor: the ground tax, the income tax, and the census tax. Here, the question concerned the census tax. If Jesus said that it was unlawful to pay the tax, the pro-Rome Herodians and their allies would report him to the Roman officials who would then arrest him as a revolutionary. If Jesus said that it was lawful to pay the tax, the insurgents and their supporters would turn against him, and he would be discredited in the eyes of the people who were against paying taxes to a pagan emperor on religious grounds.

The defense goes on the offensive. Jesus defeated their scheme by asking his challengers to show him "*the coin of tribute*" – the coin they would give to the tax-gatherer. Rather than answering their question directly, Jesus asked them a question, thus turning their trap inside out and upside down: "*Whose image [eikon in Greek] and inscription are these?*" "*Caesar's,*" they said. Jesus then said, "*Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar -- and to God what belongs to God.*" In other words, we give to the emperor the coin because his image is on it, and we give to God our own selves because we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:26). By this answer Jesus reminds his questioners that if they are so concerned and careful about paying taxes to the state, they should be much more concerned and careful about their direct service of, and obligations to, God, their Creator and Lord.

**Life messages:** The episode teaches us the nature of our obligations to God and to our country, and it shows us how, with God's help, we can be ideal citizens of both earth and Heaven. 1) Since everything is God's, we must give ourselves to Him 100%, not just 10% on Sundays. 2) We should be generous in fulfilling our Sunday obligations and find time every day for prayer and worship in the family, for the reading of the Bible and the proper training of our children in Faith and morals. 3) As citizens of a country, it is the duty of Christians to pay for the services and the privileges that government provides, like paved roads, police and fire departments, banks and other necessities. 4) Another way of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's is to participate actively in the running of the government, electing the most suitable candidates and influencing them through frequent contacts.

**June 3 Wednesday: St Charles Lwanga and companions, Martyrs** For a brief account, click on: <https://franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day-saint-charles-lwanga-and-companions-martyrs/>

**Mk 12:18-27: The context:** Jesus reached Jerusalem for his final Passover feast. As part of a well-planned plot to trap Jesus, the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees met him with controversial questions. When Jesus ingeniously escaped from the first two traps, the Sadducees asked a question concerning the marital state after the resurrection. The challenge to Jesus was clear: do you believe in the *written* Torah which is silent on the resurrection or do you side with the Pharisees, accepting their belief in the resurrection, based on *oral* traditions and interpretations, and thus subjecting Moses to ridicule?

The trap: Sadducees did not believe in resurrection of the dead because they claimed that Moses wrote nothing about it. Hence, in their hypothetical question (which strongly recalls the Book of Tobit and the plight of Sarah -- the woman Tobias later married -- seven times widowed and still childless), they asked Jesus to tell them who, in Heaven, would be the husband of the woman who, widowed and childless, had then been married, in succession, to her six brothers-in-law (*levires*), and had finally died childless.

Jesus goes on the offensive as defense: First, Jesus provided positive Biblical proof for the reality of resurrected existence. Jesus is presuming that Yahweh's burning bush statement about being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was in the present tense. This would prove these three patriarchs were still alive at the time of Moses, 600 years after their deaths. Thus, Jesus uses the Sadducees' sacred text of the Torah to refute their anti-resurrection belief. Since God declared Himself to be God of the patriarchs, He must somehow still be sustaining the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thereby granting them resurrection and eternal life. Thus, Jesus proved the resurrection of the body from the Torah itself. Second, Jesus explained that the afterlife would not be just an eternal replay of this life. Things would be different after death. Normal human relations, including marriage, would be transformed. Then Jesus told the Sadducees that those to whom God granted resurrection and Heavenly life with Him would be immortal, like the angels and, hence, "*children of God.*"

**Life message:** 1) We need to live the lives of resurrection people: That is, we are not to lie buried in the tomb of our sins and evil habits. Instead, we are to live joyful and peaceful lives, constantly experiencing the real presence of the Risen Lord Who gives us the assurance that our bodies also will be raised. The salutary thought of our own resurrection and eternal glory should also inspire us to honor our bodies, keeping them holy, pure and free from evil habits and to respect those with whom we come in contact, rendering them loving and humble service.

**June 4 Thursday: Mk 12:28-34:** *Another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; ...*

**The context:** A scribe who believed in both the written Law and the oral tradition was pleased to see how Jesus had defeated the Sadducee who had tried to humiliate him with the hypothetical case of a woman who had married and been widowed by seven husbands in succession. Out of admiration, the scribe challenged Jesus to summarize the most important of the Mosaic Laws in one sentence. In the Judaism of Jesus' day, there was a double tendency: to expand the Mosaic Law into hundreds of rules and regulations and to condense the 613 precepts of the Torah into a single sentence or few sentences.

**Jesus' novel contribution:** Jesus gave a straightforward answer, quoting directly from the Law itself and startling all with his profound simplicity and mastery of the Law of God and its purpose. He combined the first sentence of the Jewish *Shema* prayer from Deuteronomy 6:5: ... *Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*" with its complementary law from Leviticus 19:18: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" Thus, Jesus proclaims that true religion is to love God both directly and as living in our neighbor. Jesus underlines the principle that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves because both of us bear God's image. For, to honor God's image is to honor both Him Who made it and Him Whom it resembles. Besides, our neighbors, too, are the children of God our Father, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus. Love for our neighbor is a matter, not of feelings, but of deeds by which we share with others the unmerited love that God lavishes on us. This is the *agape* love for neighbor that God commands in His Law. Jesus then uses the parable of the Good Samaritan, as reported in Luke's Gospel, to show them what God means by "*neighbor.*"

**Life Messages:** 1) We need to love God whole-heartedly: Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, means that we should place God's will ahead of our own, seek the Lord's will in all things, and make it paramount in our lives. It also means that we must find time to adore Him, to present our needs before Him, and to ask His pardon and forgiveness for our sins. 2) God's will is that we should love everyone, seeing Him in our neighbor. This means we have to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for everyone without regard to color, race, gender, age, wealth, social status, intelligence, education, or charm.

**June 5 Friday St. Boniface, Bishop and Martyr** For a short biography, click on [https:// franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day-saint-boniface-bishop-and-martyr](https://franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day-saint-boniface-bishop-and-martyr)

**Mk 12: 35-37:** 35 *And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet.' 37 David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.*

**The context:** Today's Gospel describes how Jesus catches the Pharisees in their own rabbinic reasoning by quoting David's Psalm 110 in which the psalmist has David call the Messiah his "*Lord.*"

How can Christ be the son of David and his Lord? Based on 2 Sm 7:13 (*"I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"*), the Jews believed that the Messiah would be a descendent of King David. Since children were supposed to be less than their father, especially if the father were somebody like the great King David, Jesus asks the scholars, *"How is it possible that David would call his descendant 'Lord?'"* In other words, how could King David proclaim that his future heir would be both *Messiah (Christ)*, and his *Lord*? How is the Messiah, the Son of David, greater than David?

The answer: Jesus was known as being of the line of King David. Joseph was of the house of David. So, too, probably, was Mary because people often married within their own tribe. Hence, Jesus was son of David by the flesh, but Lord of David by his divinity, just as Jesus is both son of Mary and Son of God, her Lord. That is why at the Annunciation, Mary received this message: *"And the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end"* (Lk 1:32-33). Paul notes that Jesus is, *"His Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power"* (Rom 1:3-4).

**Life messages:** We need to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior in our daily lives. How? 1) We have to invite him to be the king of our heart and the ruler of our thoughts, relationships, and actions. 2) Then we should give Jesus free rein in every area of our lives. 3) Finally, we should surrender our lives to him serving others humbly, lovingly and selflessly.

**June 6 Saturday: St. Norbert, Bishop** For a short biography, click on <https://franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day-saint-Norbert-Bishop/>

**Mk 12:38-44:** *28 In the course of His teaching, Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes ... 44 her whole livelihood).*

Jesus here confronts the Temple authorities and challenges the abuses in the "organized religion" of his time. After engaging in debate with the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the Herodians, Jesus contrasts the external signs of honor sought by the scribes with the humble, sacrificial offering of a poor widow and declares that she has found true honor in God's eyes because of her total commitment to God's service with a humble and generous heart.

The attack on pride and hypocrisy: The scribes of Jesus' day were experts in the Law of Moses, scholars to whom people turned for a proper understanding of God's will as revealed in Scripture. But in today's Gospel, Jesus moves from the scribes' erroneous theology to their bankrupt ethics, reflected in their craving for pre-eminence both in the synagogues and in the market places and banquet halls. The scribes considered that the respect given to them by the common people in public places was their right because of their learning in the Law, and this made them arrogant and proud. So Jesus publicly criticizes their behavior as a ceaseless grasping for honor. Jesus also accuses the scribes of offering long prayers to God

as a means of asserting their superior piety. Jesus denounces the shameless profiteering of the scribes at the expense of widows. They often acted as trustees for the estates of wealthy widows and diverted the Temple fund intended for the support of poor widows to buy expensive robes and temple decorations.

The widow's mite: While sitting in the Court of Women, watching how rich people put their offerings for the support of Temple worship and the poor, Jesus publicly expressed his admiration for a poor widow who put in her tiny gift of two *leptons* as her offering. While the rich put in much, and the moderately well-off put in a decent amount, this poor widow offered to God everything she had. In other words, she gave herself totally into God's hands with the sure conviction that He would give her the support she needed.

**Life messages:** 1) We need to appreciate, support, and encourage the widows of our parish because they are often active participants in all the liturgical celebrations and parish organizations, and volunteers in visiting and serving the sick and the shut-ins. 2) While we judge people by what they possess, Jesus measures us on the basis of our inner motives and the intentions hidden behind our actions. He evaluates us on the basis of the sacrifices we make for others and on the degree of our surrender to His holy will, gifts that cost us more than just opening our purses.

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