



[Jesus said,] "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

MATTHEW 21:43

MARJUS SPIKE FROM /REKELS

Caring for God's Vineyard

Today's readings are troubling texts. This is not because of what they say, but because of how they have been interpreted through the ages. In the first reading, despite everything the owner has done, the vineyard identified as Israel/Judah has brought forth wild grapes. In the Gospel the issue is with the trustworthiness of those who work and care for the vineyard. It is clear that Jesus is criticizing the leaders of his day with a failure of leadership. For this reason, leadership will be taken from them and given to others.

Both of these readings have been interpreted as condemnation of the Jewish people. This has sometimes resulted in anti-Semitism. We must remember that both readings reflect internal problems—something that all religious bodies experience. Despite their failure, the people of Judah

were still called God's "cherished plant" (Isaiah 5:7). In the Gospel, leadership was taken from some Jews and given to other Jews—not to outsiders. One religious tradition didn't replace another.

We experience similar struggles in today's Church. As the vineyard of God, what kind of fruit do we produce? After all God has done for us, how do we respond? How faithful are we in caring for God's vineyard? This is a difficult time with respect to religious leadership, but how supportive are we of genuine local Church leadership? You and I have been entrusted with the growth and health of the Church. How good have we been at caring for that vineyard?

—Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *We are the Church. How do we handle some of its internal problems?*
- ★ *We pray for the leaders of the Church at every liturgy. Make those prayers your own.*