Suggested Opening Song: All Are Welcome, #142

Today's Gospel reminds us that Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith, of the Church, and of our lives as his disciples. It also reminds us that he became the cornerstone after he was rejected by the religious and secular leaders of his day. On Respect Life Sunday, we pray for those who are often rejected by society and our leaders, left vulnerable to unjust laws and practices, from the unborn to the terminally ill, from immigrants and refugees to criminals on death row. Let us never forget that we all have been made in the image and likeness of God.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p. 142
I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) ***and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*** **For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Introductory Rite:
Greeting:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p. 10
Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:
Almighty ever-living God, who in the abundance of your kindness surpass the merits and desires of those who entreat you, pour out your mercy upon us to pardon what conscience dreads and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 98
A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah Isaiah *5:1-7*

Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes.

Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but overgrown with thorns and briers; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it. The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Responsorial Psalm *Psalm 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20*
R/. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.
R/. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it.
It put forth its foliage to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. **R/.**

Why have you broken down its walls, so that every passer-by plucks its fruit,
The boar from the forest lays it waste, and the beasts of the field feed upon it? **R/.**

Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted, the son of man whom you yourself made strong. **R/.**

Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.
O LORD, God of hosts, restore us; if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved. **R/.**

Second Reading
A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians *Philippians 4:6-9*

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel *Matthew 21: 33-43*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew **Glory to you, Lord**

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

- Jesus would have been familiar with Isaiah's parable about the vineyard gone bad. He would have also expected that the chief priests and elders he was addressing were familiar with it as well. In that light, they would have all realized that not too many years after Isaiah spoke his words, the house of Israel and the kingdom of Judah fell to the invading Babylonians. The king was captured, his sons were executed, the temple was destroyed, and most of the Jewish people were exiled. Six centuries later, Jesus begins his parable with an almost identical description of a vineyard, then speaks of servants being mistreated and killed. In Isaiah's parable, the vineyard—the kingdom on earth—is destroyed. However, Jesus' vineyard—the kingdom of God—is given to those who will tend it responsibly and produce its fruit.

- We are neither the owner nor the builder of the vineyard. We are the tenants, tending to the vineyard so that the vines will produce good fruit. Recall that elsewhere Jesus called himself the vine and his disciples the branches. He told them to remain in him and the vine would bear much fruit. We remain in Christ when we make him the cornerstone of our lives. When we make him our cornerstone, we willingly pursue and exercise the virtues Saint Paul lists in the second reading: truth, honor, justice, purity, love, and graciousness. In doing so, we produce the good fruit of the kingdom of God.

- It can be quite difficult to handle an unplanned pregnancy or to care for an elderly family member who needs round-the-clock attention. Those who are at vulnerable stages of life may be ignored by authorities, by people unwilling to make that kind of sacrifice, and by legislators who make it easier for them to be rejected or discarded. At times like this, it is especially important to heed Paul's virtues and do what is honorable, what is gracious, and what is worthy of praise.

Question of the Week

When have I failed to do what is honorable and praiseworthy? What challenges have I overcome in cases where I did what was honorable and praiseworthy?

Prayer of the Faithful:
Saint Paul told the Philippians to make their requests known to God by prayer and petition. Nearly two thousand years later, we take this opportunity during every celebration of the Eucharist to do the same.

- For the Church, that we may produce the fruit of the kingdom of God through our works of mercy, charity, and evangelization, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For world leaders, that they may work to reduce pollution in the air, in the water, and on the land, so that this planet can better support the growth and diversity of plants, animals, and people, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For those struggling with an unintended pregnancy or with caring for an aging family member, that they may realize the dignity of all human life and receive the support they need, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For those suffering from crop failures and food shortages, from farmers to people living in poverty who may go hungry, that the generosity of those with means may exceed their expectations, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all of us, that we may seek out new opportunities to put our faith into practice, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you have leased a vineyard to us where we are called to do your work. Guide us in making it fruitful, today and for generations to come. Grant this and all the prayers and petitions we make, through our cornerstone, Christ the Lord.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p. 176
Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:
The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:
Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:
Grant us, almighty God, that we may be refreshed and nourished by the Sacrament which we have received, so as to be transformed into what we consume.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Concluding Rite:
Final Blessing:
May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**

Suggested Closing Song: Make Us True Servants, #163