

HOMILY FOR 27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Many critics consider Nicolo Paganini to be the finest violinist who ever lived. When he died he willed that his beautiful violin should go to the city of his birth...the city of Genoa, Italy. But there was a condition...the violin could never be played again. It was an unfortunate and sad condition because this beautiful instrument was made of a special wood. And if the wood was used and handled, it remained vibrant and dynamic. But left unused, it declined in quality and began to decay.

And so this marvelous, mellow-toned violin became a worm-eaten relic that served no purpose but to become a museum artifact.

The Gospel today presents us with the parable of the vineyard. The vineyard, entrusted to the tenants, grows and matures and becomes rich with possibility and is ripe for harvesting. But the tenants refuse to share the gifts entrusted to them. Becoming obsessed with security and the defense of their possessions, they kill off anyone, including the king's son, who invites them to share what they have. In the end the greed of the tenants becomes their undoing for the king will have no part of them.

Our lives are a vineyard that God entrusts to us. And each of our lives, each of our vineyards, is richly blessed. And the voice of God's

Son calls out to us to share our talents, our riches, our giftedness with those around us and with those who have less. But sadly, we too often become more interested in security...in building walls and towers around ourselves rather than sharing what we have. We forget that our gifts, our talents and our richness are meant to be used and not just stored up.

Paganini's violin was a great treasure that was rich with glorious sound. But it only had value when it was used. Unused, it simply decayed and became nothing more than a relic. Likewise, a life withdrawn from generous sharing and love of others loses its meaning and become nothing more than a museum piece. How richly blessed each one of us truly is. How sad it would be if we failed to heed the call of God to bring forth the treasures of our lives and share them with others. For like Paganini's famous violin, the gift of our lives is meant to be used...not just stored up, protected and ultimately wasted. The vineyard is ripe for the harvest and God calls out to each one of us: "Come, share what you have and discover that the real treasure is not in what you possess but in what you are willing to give away."