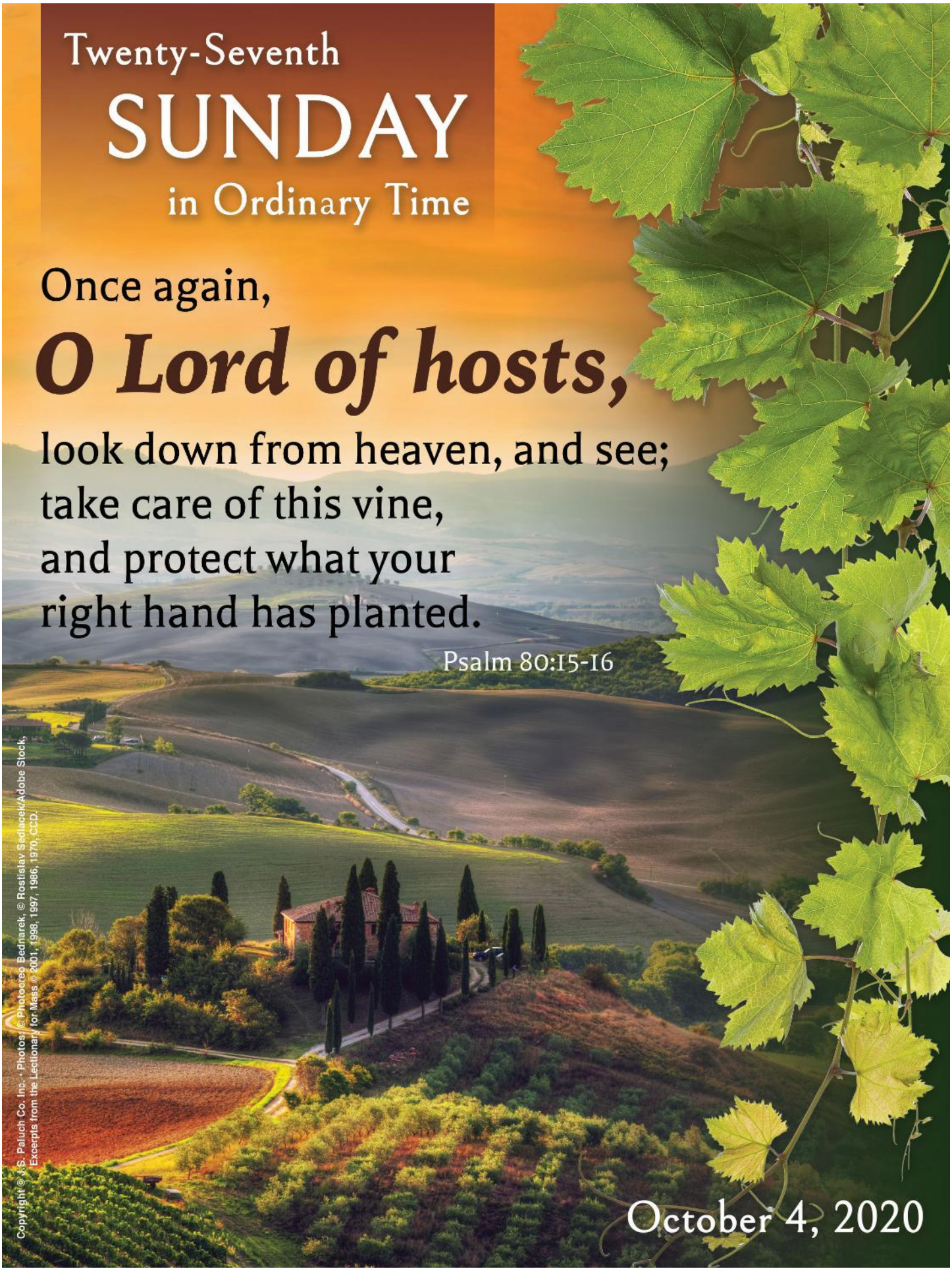

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Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

October 4

When Franco Zeffirelli's Brother Sun, Sister Moon was released (1972), people were shocked by the movie's graphic nudity in the dramatic conversion scene. Son of a wealthy merchant, Francis' aimless adolescence ended when a failed military expedition led to his imprisonment and complete breakdown. Once home, Francis rediscovered God in the beauty of nature and the ugliness of human suffering, caring for lepers, praying in the little church of San Damiano, whose crucified Jesus he heard calling, "Repair my house, Francis, which is falling into ruins." Francis sold his possessions—and his father's—to fulfill this command. When his father objected, Francis disrobed: "I return the clothes, your name, and all you gave me: God alone is my Father now." Later, the pope would dream of a ragged friar stretching forth a single hand to prop up the crumbling papal Cathedral of Saint John Lateran. Francis indeed helped rebuild the universal Church, founding the Friars Minor (Franciscans), dying at a young forty-four, bearing the stigmata of the Christ whose living icon he remains—in the Church and far beyond it.

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Ask For Help

Ask Our Lady to help you. Ask her to entreat her Son to let you know what you should do.

—Bl. Marie Rose Durocher

The Gift Of The Reign Of God

Matthew's Gospel today expands on Isaiah's ballad considerably. A comparison with the same story in Mark's Gospel clearly shows us that here the author is busy teaching this community of Jewish Christians: "This is a story about Israel a long time ago; this is also a story about Jesus and the skeptical leaders."

Jesus as much as told these Jewish leaders that they were the tenants who first stoned their own prophets. And he told the leaders they were the tenants who would soon even dispose of him—Jesus—and, in doing so, would forfeit their privileged place of presenting to the world the promised Messiah.

"And this," says Matthew's Gospel, "is a story about you, the inheritors of what was first offered to Israel." The reign of God was first opened to Israel and is now given to the whole world, but it must be received as a gift. The first Christians are the new tenants in the vineyard. The deeper reality of the reign or kingdom of God is that it is available to everyone on the face of the earth—Israel included.

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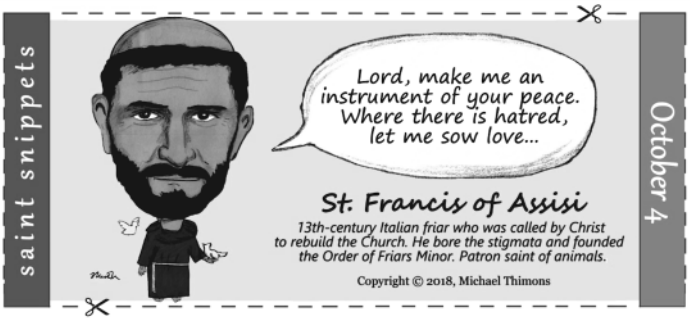
Readings for the Week

Monday:	Gal 1:6-12; Ps 111:1b-2, 7-9, 10c; Lk 10:25-37
Tuesday:	Gal 1:13-24; Ps 139:1b-3, 13-15; Lk 10:38-42
Wednesday:	Gal 2:1-2, 7-14; Ps 117:1bc, 2; Lk 11:1-4
Thursday:	Gal 3:1-5; Lk 1:69-75; Lk 11:5-13
Friday:	Gal 3:7-14; Ps 111:1b-6; Lk 11:15-26
Saturday:	Gal 3:22-29; Ps 105:2-7; Lk 11:27-28
Sunday:	Is 25:6-10a; Ps 23:1-6; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Mt 22:1-14 [1-10]

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time; Respect Life Sunday
Monday:	Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos
Tuesday:	St. Bruno; Bl. Marie Rose Durocher
Wednesday:	Our Lady of the Rosary
Friday:	St. Denis and Companions; St. John Leonardi
Saturday:	Blessed Virgin Mary



Master And Servant

Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.

—P. T. Barnum

Today's Readings

First Reading — The vineyard of the LORD is the house of Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7).

Psalm — The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel (Psalm 80).

Second Reading — God's peace will guard your hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-9).

Gospel — The kingdom of God will be given to those who will produce its fruit (Matthew 21:33-43).

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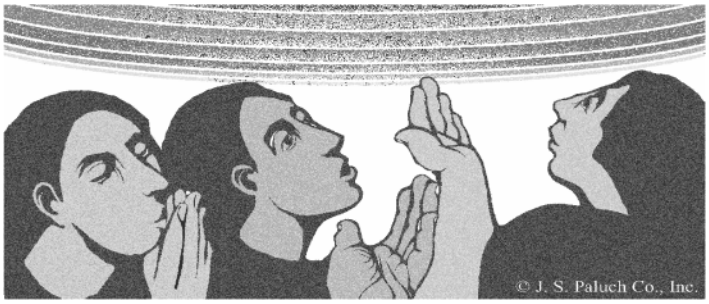

Twenty-seventh Sunday
In Ordinary Time
October 4, 2020

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.
—Philippians 4:6

Treasures From Our Tradition

The confessional is a familiar setting in literature and drama. Everyone from Doestoevsky and Shakespeare down the line to Seinfeld has used the sacrament to tragic or comic effect or to reveal aspects of character otherwise hidden. All of this theater, from world classics to slapstick, has had a numbing effect on our own expectations, and has skewed how the culture looks at us and our struggle with sin and forgiveness, hope and healing.

Yet the artists are on to something. The reconciliation chapel is a place where hearts are laid bare, where honesty is the watchword, and people confess their deepest needs. It is also a place of rebirth, or at least realignment. It is, like the baptismal font, a place where something dies, and where something else is born. Today, although literature has barely caught up, the place is usually not the dark and gloomy cabinet of old; rather it is a chapel that speaks of peace, serenity, and the comfort of a welcome home. People in one parish were astonished recently to see their children skipping with delight as they left the place of their first confession. We have to wait a bit for world literature to catch up with this reality, but at least we can experience the joy of penance, the thrill of a new beginning, the assurance of God's love.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Today's first reading, psalm, and Gospel concentrate heavily on vineyards. For those of us who don't drink wine or have never set foot in a vineyard, these scriptures may seem inaccessible. But if we consider the tremendous importance of wine to the ancient world, we hear the scriptures asking us to make a life-or-death decision. Choosing death means forsaking our relationship with God and taking upon ourselves all the anxiety of faithlessness. Choosing life means paying attention to the kingdom of God on earth, striving to pursue "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious." Today's vineyard metaphors invite us to identify our highest priority in life and tend to it. If we ask, God will help us order our lives correctly so we are free to cultivate our vineyards in love.

CONNECTED TO TRADITION

The Church presents today's Old Testament and Gospel readings together, as a pair. We delight in the symmetry between the two passages. Jesus, who is the Word of God, knows the Hebrew scriptures by heart and intends for his parable to echo Isaiah. As Jesus begins speaking, he summons the words of Isaiah, knowing his learned audience of chief priests and elders will feel comfortable with a familiar scripture passage. These scholars recognize immediately that Jesus is referring to a prophetic passage about sin, about the chosen people's tendency to turn away from God and grow "wild."

AMAZED BY INNOVATION

What Jesus does next surprises his audience. He adds a new twist to Isaiah's well-known words, adding a new character, the landowner's very own son. Adding this innovation shows that Jesus confirms the prophet's warning—that God longs for "his cherished plant" to grow according to the divine plan. The narrative twist also allows Jesus to reveal the fullness of God's plan in a way his audience can understand. Like a master teacher, Jesus respects the knowledge and faithfulness of the chief priests and elders, and then builds on what they know. By adding the landowner's son to the parable of the vineyard, Jesus gently expresses his own mission as the Son of God. Matthew's Gospel often depicts the chief priests and elders as oppositional; they worry that Jesus will abolish the law and foment rebellion. As the Lord said earlier in Matthew's Gospel, however, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Jesus' audience is skeptical about him, horrified at the thought of a mere human being claiming that he is the Son of God. Jesus' masterful approach provides an opportunity for his audience to give him the benefit of the doubt. In this way, Jesus proposes—not imposes—his kingship, inviting us all to follow him.

Today's Readings: Is 5:1–7; Ps 80:9, 12, 13–14, 15–16, 19–20; Phil 4:6–9; Mt 21:33–43

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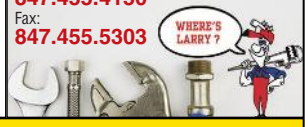

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