

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
8th October 2023 - 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Year A): 1st: Isaiah 5:1-7. 2nd: Philippians 4:6-9. **Gospel:** Matthew 21:33-43

Before the availability of concrete blocks and precast cement the stones of a building had to support one another, and they were locked together by the keystone at the apex of an arch. As building work continues again now in Penzance, we can see that in reality especially in the long staircase window very visible as we approach from the presbytery side.

The rejected stone chosen as the keystone is a very consoling image. In Hebrew, the words for **stone** and **son** are very similar. *Ben means son and eben means stone.*

It was easy for Jesus as he spoke about the rejected son to switch to the verse of the psalm about the rejected stone, which was later chosen as the important keystone.

The early Christian preachers liked to use that verse to explain what happened to Jesus. He was rejected on the cross but vindicated by the Father in his resurrection.

It is a Psalm always used at the Easter Vigil, at Mass on Easter Day and on Low Sunday, the Easter Octave. An important psalm for us. As the rejected stone, Jesus entered into solidarity with innocent victims of every age.

The parable of the vineyard is a story of terrible violence and bloodshed. Innocent people are beaten and slaughtered by ambitious men.

The blood of Jesus, shed upon the cross became part of the historical current of innocent blood shed in every age.

In the previous 20th century alone it is estimated that over one hundred million people were killed in world wars, guerrilla wars and gang wars, sabotage, bombings, ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, gulags and assassinations. Sadly, it continues into the 21st century.

Jesus entered into the lot of all the innocent people who suffer as prisoners of conscience, refugees or victims of the suppression of human rights.

The world of innocent victims also includes all who are deprived of an equitable share of the world's resources; the victims of monetaristic policies which deprive the poor in order to protect the rich; and the victims of the exploitation of the environment which is harming our air, water and protective ozone layer.

Pope Francis has this week updated *Laudate Si* with more urgency.

Daily we too can be victims of malice or misunderstanding, callousness or carelessness, spite or selfishness. We suffer through the ambition, deceit, vindictiveness, greed and insensitivity of others.

All who are innocent victims can look up at Jesus on the cross, knowing that his extended arms are open wide to embrace them: for he is the rejected stone, one with all rejects and victims.

On the cross he is a sign of compassion and solidarity.
And in his resurrection, he is a sign of hope and vindication.

The stone rejected by the builders is chosen for the vital job of keystone.
'This was the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see.'

Jesus is the sign that God is on the side of the innocent victim.
God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will vindicate all who suffer in innocence.
But they and we must wait in patience until God's own time of vindication.

In the meantime, there is excellent advice of St Paul in the 2nd reading: ‘There is no need to worry: pray: fill your minds with what is true, noble, good and pure, and the God of peace will be with you.’

‘He is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him so that you too may be living stones making a spiritual house.’ (1 Peter 2: 4-5)

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