

What more is there to do?

As many people explore the Catholic Faith during this time of RCIA classes, one **question** that may come to mind is, “*What does the Church say about drinking wine?*”

You may know that many Protestant churches prohibit drinking wine for they see it as sinful and so they suggest drinking grape juice instead.

I find that interesting considering the fact that Our Lord drank wine ...
and Our Lord never committed a sin!

Jesus’ first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana ...
and His last miracle at the Last Supper ... **both involved wine.**
And **not only** did Jesus drink wine ... he made it ... miraculously from water!

So my answer to RCIA inquirers is ... **no, the Catholic Church does not prohibit drinking wine** ... and **in fact** it offers wine to communicants at Sunday Mass ...
and in larger quantities at Spaghetti Dinners and Wedding Receptions.

When people hear this ... they’re already liking the Catholic Church a lot more!

So, God is OK with us drinking wine ... in fact in **two** of our Scripture readings today, God instructs us by using the image of a vineyard – where wine is made.

Speaking through His greatest Prophet, Isaiah, He uses the word vineyard 6 times in 7 verses! And lest the Protestants think He was talking about grape juice, Isaiah says that in addition to planting choice vines, “they hewed out a wine press.”

And then in the Gospel, with Jesus speaking directly to the people, we hear the word vineyard 4 times in 10 verses. And yes, here too, a wine press was dug in it!

And what was God wanting to come out of each vineyard?
He was looking for a choice finished product ...
to come from the choice plants he planted.

But no, in the first case ... **the result of His work was nothing but wild grapes** ...
and in the second case... **the people withheld giving Him the finished product.**

Who are these people?

Isaiah explains, “*The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel ...
and the people of Judah are his cherished plant.*”

And Jesus, speaking to the chief priests and elders of the Jews says, “*the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.*”

Most of us have probably never planted anything more than a tomato plant. But if you did and you gave it good soil and plenty of sunshine and water, then you had every reason to expect it would grow and produce **choice tomatoes.**

Well, imagine planting a whole hillside of plants hoping that they would grow. Imagine how you would feel if the crop turned out to be wild tomatoes ... or if the person caring for them refused to give them to you.

How would you feel?

Severely disappointed ... and maybe even downright angry, wouldn't you?

Well, those were **the very emotions** that **God** expressed long ago.

God laments, "*What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done?*"

How many parents there are that ask that question of their children ... who have grown up only to wander away from God ... and some into grave sin!

That's not the way it's supposed to be! I didn't raise you to turn out this way!

You gave them a loving home and guided them to receive **God's power** and **blessing in the Sacraments of the Church ... and still ...** they have produced wild grapes ... or sour grapes ... or no grapes at all!

How many kids there are today who after receiving a quality upbringing have now chosen as young adults to ... no longer go to Church ... or to begin having sexual relations before marriage ... or to enter into homosexual activities ... or to begin using drugs or to begin abusing alcohol ... or even to kill other people ... even their own babies.

The Parents of these kids are filled with grief as they ask themselves ... "*What more was there for me to do? What should I have done that I did not do?*"

All the while thinking, "*That's not why I had you! That's not why I gave you life!*" I raised you to do good ... and you've chosen to do evil.

Oh, the **time** and **energy** and **love** and **care** parents invest in their children ... **only to have them grow up bearing less than choice fruit.**

Well, just like good parents, God also invests a lot of time and **care** and **love** and **attention** in **all of us ... His children.** And His expectation is the same as our good parents ... that we would produce good fruit at the proper times.

Yet sadly as **Isaiah** says, **God** “*looked for judgment and found bloodshed!*
For justice, but hark, the outcry!”

How prophetic that account was, written some **500 years** before **Jesus**.

For as Jesus describes in our Gospel today,
the **day** would come when the Landowner, who is God, would send His Son
to **His Chosen People ... only to be mistreated** by them.

And **Jesus** foretells His own demise when He says,
“*They seized Him, threw Him out of the vineyard, and killed Him.*”

In this God saw the bloodshed and he heard the outcry ... of His Son, His beloved!

In **God’s just anger**, he allowed the enemy to break through the wall of Jerusalem
in the year **70 AD** and destroy it and leave **the Temple** to be trampled upon.

So **God’s just anger** was manifested as He had warned ...
because He had invested Himself with His people and **they** failed to bear good fruit.

Could God’s warning still apply to us today?
I **certainly think so!**

You see **God** continues to invest Himself in all of us, His children ...
and so **He** expects us to reflect and radiate His goodness in the way we live.

But sadly, when God comes looking for good behavior, He often finds bloodshed ...
when He comes looking for justice, He often hears the outcry!

Where does He hear and see this you may ask?
From the millions of babies that are aborted every year.
From the thousands killed by others in war and on our city streets.
From the thousands who kill themselves by suicide
From the thousands who kill themselves by overdosing on drugs or alcohol.
From the thousands who are physically or sexually abused by others.

In all of this ... He sees the bloodshed ... He hears the outcry!

This is not why He brought us into being ... to bear such sickening fruit.

In response to this, **in mid-January** of each year, **the Church** celebrates
Right to Life Sunday ... as a way to call us to work for ... **the protection** of every
Hunan life ... especially the most vulnerable ... babies in their Mother’s wombs.

And **then again**, in early **October**, the **Church** celebrates “**Respect Life Sunday**” to formally remind us of the reverence and respect we are to have for all other people ... who are **each made** in the image and likeness of God.

Pope Francis has this to say, “*Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn, and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.*”

As revealed in Isaiah, God plants “*the choicest of vines*” and He expects good results.

The choicest of vines are **the souls**, made in the image and likeness of God.

And because of His care for us, He expects us to take care of **each other**.

His 5th commandment is very clear ... *thou shall not kill!*

God is Life! He is **the Giver** of Life!

In **our Creed** we say, “*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the Giver of Life!*”

God calls us to be **people of Life** ... and to build a **Culture of Life**.

Our mission is to show each person the **love of Christ**.

Human life is from God ... it is **holy**.

It is to be reverenced and respected and protected **from cradle to grave**.

On this **Respect Life Sunday** we are reminded that human life is holy to God ... from the moment of natural conception to the moment of natural death!

Let’s reflect on the **Holy Father’s** words

“Each of us is a Masterpiece of God’s creation”

And let’s pray and work **to stop the bleeding** and **quiet the outcry**.

Since we are **people of God** ... we must be people of Life.

So let’s blossom **the seeds of goodness** God has planted in us by:

- Proclaiming life
- Praying for life
- Voting for life , and
- Standing up for life.