The Wicked Tenants
(From Conversation with God, Fernandez Carvajal)

Today's Liturgy speaks to us in very beautiful allegories about God's love for his people and of their failure to correspond. In the First Reading we read the Prophet Isaiah's love song of the vineyard. Israel is symbolized by God's plantation which is full of promise. Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it well and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. Even though the vines had been planted in good ground they bore sour fruit The Prophet Isaiah continues: And now, o inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard; that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

Palestine was a land of vineyards. The prophets of the Old Testament returned again and again to this popular image of the chosen people. Israel is the vineyard of God, the work of the Lord, the joy of his heart. Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard transplanted by the water. In today's Gospel the Lord makes reference to the words of Isaiah in the parable of the vineyard. Jesus reveals to us the infinite patience of God, the owner of the vineyard, who sends one messenger after another in search of fruit. These are the prophets of the Old Testament. The Father finally sends his beloved son and the tenants murder him: And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Here is an unmistakable reference to the coming crucifixion outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The vineyard is Israel. She did not live up to her divine calling. The vineyard is also a symbol of the Church and therefore of each one of us. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ without whom we can do nothing.

Let us meditate today about whether the Lord can find abundant fruits of sanctity and apostolate in our life. They should be abundant, since we have received so much already. The fruits can come in the form of acts of charity, of work well done, of apostolate with friends and family, of acts of love and reparation to God and of contradictions accepted with faith. Are we producing instead wild grapes that represent sins, lukewarmness, spiritual mediocrity, faults, etc.?