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-- A few years ago, when Great Britain still had a considerable force in Afghanistan, a video came out of Prince Harry engaged in the fighting in one area of the country. He had wanted to see combat action with his company.

-- Soon after that video came out, he was recalled from that area. The official reason was that it endangered his company, since the enemy would, no doubt, target a unit where a prince of England was fighting.

-- That incident came to mind when I read the gospel parable of the wicked tenants. It came to mind because it demonstrated the audacity of the owner in sending his own son to collect his fruit from the vineyard.

-- After all, the workers had already proved they were hardened thugs. They had manhandled, mistreated and even killed some of the servants he'd sent before his son. Their behavior matched any of the terrorists we'd think of today. We wonder: *What was the owner thinking?*

-- Yet, that is what God is like. God tries again and again with us. He even sent his Son into the world to bring his message. He was killed, but some followers of his took up the message that he was still alive.

-- So God has continued to send new people into his vineyard. The followers of Jesus who first heard this were the first wave, so to speak.

-- Over the history of the Church, this parable has been misused to denigrate the Jewish people, as if they alone were the ones who rejected Jesus. But, remember, the first followers of Jesus were primarily members of the Jewish people.

-- And we ourselves should not feel complacent. Many of us who've professed faith in Jesus Christ over the years have not been very faithful to his message. God has sought out new people to proclaim his message faithfully. Many of the saints were such reformers in the Church.

-- What should impress us most is that God, the owner of the heavenly vineyard, continues to seek out people to do his work. God has stopped at nothing—after all, he sent his Son into the world for our sakes.

-- Unlike the vineyard owner in the first reading, he has not completely abandoned the vineyard, even in the worst of times. It has been damaged by sin, but God has continued to encourage his people to bring in the harvest.

-- We are all challenged by this parable to examine how we take care of the gifts God has entrusted to us in order to do his work. As individuals, we must ask what type of stewards we have been of the gifts each of us has been given.

-- As a parish, we should examine how we are reaching out to others outside our community to show them God's love. Are people being attracted to our parish community? That is one good barometer of our effectiveness.

-- In the greater Catholic community, we notice how (in most parts of our country) the main growth in the Church is among Hispanics, particularly in the younger generation. How effectively are we reaching out to them and empowering them in parish life?

-- Our God has taken a much bolder step than the royal family of England did in allowing one of their sons into a dangerous situation. He has sent his only Son into the world to free us from sin.

-- The fruits of his labor are there for the harvesting. The question that remains is this: *Will we be good stewards of the vineyard of the Lord, here and now?*