

## Readings for March 3, 2019 -- Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

# Bearing Good Fruit

*Those who are “planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish” and bear good fruit. We should strive to be like the teacher (Jesus), speaking good words and showing our character in words and actions. By our fruits we will be known.*

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### **Opening Prayer: (Or choose one from the back prayer pages)**

Good and gracious God, we praise you and thank you for the gift of your Son who brings your message to each of us. Open our hearts to hear the words that you speak to us, and give us the courage to respond in faith and love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Jesuitprayer.org)

**Opening Thoughts:** Take 5 to 10 minutes to think about the following questions. (Share your thoughts with the group, if you are willing.)

What are your hopes for this time of extra prayer and reflection with your Small Church Community?

What can you do in your home to make this time more significant or fruitful?

What can you do in your community, as a response to God’s great love for you?

### **Reading 1 SIR 27:4-7**

When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do one's faults when one speaks.  
As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace, so in tribulation is the test of the just.  
The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had; so too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind.  
Praise no one before he speaks, for it is then that people are tested.

### **Responsorial Psalm PS 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16**

R. (cf. 2a) **Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.**

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
to sing praise to your name, Most High,  
To proclaim your kindness at dawn  
and your faithfulness throughout the night.

R. **Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.**

The just one shall flourish like the palm tree,

like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.  
They that are planted in the house of the LORD  
shall flourish in the courts of our God.

**R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.**

They shall bear fruit even in old age;  
vigorous and sturdy shall they be,  
Declaring how just is the LORD,  
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

**R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.**

### **Reading 2 1 COR 15:54-58**

Brothers and sisters: When this which is corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility  
and this which is mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the word that is written shall come about:

*Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory?*

*Where, O death, is your sting?*

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted  
to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

### **Gospel LK 6:39-45**

Jesus told his disciples a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person?

Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher;

but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.

Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?

How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,'

when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye?

You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first;

then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

"A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes,

nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart

produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil;

for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks."

## **Related Reflections**

**Touching Our Inner Core**

Karl A. Meninger, M.D., in an article on intimacy, talks about intimacy being a quality of a person, not a relationship. He says "in so far as I can be close to myself, I can be close to others; in so far as I can be intimate to myself, I can be intimate with others." The deepest part of each one of us is within us, we are touching the God within.

God speaks to us in our deepest human experiences, feelings, desires, thoughts, or ideas. So to be aware of these experiences is to become aware of God's work in them and then to offer ourselves through them to God. We focus on our own experience to hear God's word in them and then are called to respond. What is God saying to us through this? We don't need to solve problems, worry, plan, or control. In other words, we recognize the God within and then listen reverently to the many ways God speaks to us through our thoughts, our feelings, our children, our students, our fellow workers. Intimacy then is not primarily a sharing with another. Intimacy starts with being intimate with myself. Intimacy is knowing the core of things myself. Then what I do flows from where I've been. But intimacy begins with getting in contact with myself. I have to be in contact with myself before I can donate, give myself or share. It is important to get in touch with our deepest human experiences because that is where God is present to us. Where we are most present, God is most present.

(J.J. O'Leary, S.J. from  
Ignatianspirituality.com)

### **Reflection from Fr. John Shea, SJ**

Religious traditions often issue injunctions to moral behavior. "Be compassionate. Be just. Be truthful." When people try to be faithful to these injunctions, they find they are not able to carry them out. The spiritual wisdom on this failure is: behavior is intimately tied to a sense of identity. If we do not know we are good people, we will not be able to do good deeds. Moral change is dependent on identity change. Good trees bear good fruit; bad trees do not. Fig trees bear figs, not thorns.

There is in each person a spiritual center whose image is the heart. The heart is a hidden source of speech. In fact, it has within it an abundance, a treasure, that the mouth draws on and makes available in the outer world. Therefore, heart appears in the outer world and can be judged through what a person says. If a person's words spin out scenarios of reconciliation and peace, we can be assured the heart is in touch with the God of peace and reconciliation. What appears can be traced back to what is hidden.

(John Shea, *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels*, Liturgical Press)

### **Removing the Beams**

In any failure, or personal error, our ego instinctively tries to excuse itself. It is the tactic of pride--which is not willing to admit its mistakes and schemes--to hide them under more or less false pretexts, always finding some way to blame them on other people or on circumstances. Adam and Eve acted in this way after their sin; it is also the instinct of anyone who commits a fault. Herein lies greater danger for the soul, because it is impossible for us to correct our faults if we are not willing to acknowledge them. It requires great courage to tear down these ingenious but inconsistent constructions of self-love, to expose our failings and look them squarely in the face, just as they are, without blaming them on anyone but ourselves. "When we commit a fault," said Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, "we must not

attribute it to a physical cause, such as illness or the weather, but we must attribute it to our own lack of perfection.... Occasions do not make one weak, but they do show what he is.”

Excusing our faults may satisfy our pride, but in reality, it is voluntarily blinding oneself and making oneself incapable of seeing the true situation. On the other hand, if we sincerely recognize our faults, we have already taken the first step toward correcting them.

(Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D. from *Magnificat Vol. 20, No. 13*

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O Eternal One,

It would be easier for me to pray

if I were clear

and of a single mind and a pure heart;

if I could be done hiding from myself

and from you, even in my prayers.

But, I am who I am,

mixture of motives and excuses,

blur of memories,

quiver of hopes,

knot of fear,

tangle of confusion,

and restless with love,

for love.

I wander somewhere between

gratitude and grievance,

wonder and routine,

high resolve and undone dreams,

generous impulses and unpaid bills.

Come, find me, Lord.

Be with me exactly as I am.

Help me find me, Lord.

Help me accept what I am,

so I can begin to be yours.

Make of me something small enough to snuggle,

young enough to question,

simple enough to giggle,

old enough to forget,

foolish enough to act for peace;

skeptical enough to doubt

the sufficiency of anything but you,

and attentive enough to listen

as you call me out of the tomb of my timidity

into the chancy glory of my possibilities

and the power of your presence.

(Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace*, LuraMedia, 1984)

**Suggested Mediation:** What do I think God sees when God looks at me? In other words, who am I before God? Take 5 to 10 minutes to reflect, then write down a few things that come to mind. (Share any thoughts with the group, if you willing).

## Discussion Questions

- What does fruitfulness mean to me? In what ways do I see myself bearing good fruit?
- Who or what has nurtured me and helped me to be more fruitful?
- Do I bring my authentic feelings and prayers to God? Do I sometimes feel I have to be perfect in the way I pray?
- In what ways can I be more myself before God? What could help me with this?

***For further meditation at home this week:***

*Read and reflect on Psalm 139 (You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb).*

### **Suggested Music**

**Endless is Your Love** (Tom Kendzia)

**Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus** (Audrey Assad)