

Homily of Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B

Let us take a closer look at the Gospel:

- ✘ “He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit.”
- ✘ “And everyone that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will bear more fruit.”
- ✘ “A branch cannot bear fruit on its own.”
- ✘ “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”
- ✘ “By this is my father glorified, that you bear much fruit.”

We are praying, today, that we may bear fruit; physical fruit and spiritual fruit.

We expect fruit from all our engagements. We feel fulfilled when there is good fruit from our labor; and we feel disappointed when there is no good fruit from our labor. Let us continue to thank God for the many good fruits from our labor: marriage, family, work, business, studies and so on. We, also, bring before God the areas that we have not borne good fruits despite our effort. There are people whose medical treatment has not borne good fruit. There are people we need to bring to God in prayer that they may bear fruit. God says in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply.” Jesus says in today’s Gospel, “By this is my father glorified, that you bear much fruit.” May these words come to fruition in our lives and the lives of those we are praying for. Amen.

We also pray that we may bear spiritual fruit. St. Paul in Galatians 5:22-23 lists some of the spiritual fruits: “The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” St. Paul, also, lists bad fruits that rotten trees bear: “immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Jesus encourages us to be known by the spiritual fruit we bear. He says, “By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:17-20).

The parable of the barren fig tree may help, further, us in our reflection: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came he came search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply. ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down’” (Luke 13:6-9). By his words and the Eucharist, Jesus cultivates the earth and fertilizes it that we may bear fruit. May we not be found without fruit.

We pray that the story of the fruitless fig tree may not be anyone’s story: “Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the time for figs. And he said to it in reply, ‘May no one ever eat of your fruit again!’” (Mark 11:13-14). Let us, therefore, bear lasting fruit.

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