

*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

This Sunday is one of the times when all three readings of the lectionary are teaching us the same message. Each has a different context and each has its own perspective, but each reveals to us the desire of God.

And what is that desire? That we bear fruit, much fruit and good fruit; that we not be cut down and thrown into the fire, but rather be like green olive trees in the Garden of the Lord.

How is it that we bear good fruit?

The prophet Zechariah begins the readings of the day by telling us how things are accomplished. Speaking of Zerubbabel, who was the prime builder of the second Temple after the Babylonian Exile, the Angel tells him: *“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”*

Zachariah 4:6b

This theme is repeated again and again in the Old Testament. What happens, what is accomplished is by the Hand of God. Working through and with those who have the faith and the fear to follow the One True and Living God. Good Works, Good Fruit, the Will of God is accomplished.

If we are to bear fruit it would seem that we do so by the Hand of God. This is certainly the message of St. Paul in many of his letters. Today we are reminded in his letter to the Romans that in Baptism we have died with Christ, we have died to the old life so that we could become adopted children of God.

And what do those children do?

They depend upon their parents to provide for them what they need to live and become productive people. We are told that we can cry to God, Abba, Daddy the intimate familial name for the God who is Father.

It was to continue His Father's work that Jesus came into the world and it is to continue the work given to us by the Father that we live... and move... and have our being.

The Gospel is the most clear and precise about what we are to do and the consequences of not doing it. Only he who does the will of my Father will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And the Will of the Father, that we bear fruit.

So we are back to the question. How is it that we bear good fruit?

St. Bernard, yes there was a St. Bernard and he was not a dog.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote of the parable of the fig tree, that God wishes not only flowers, but fruit. An interesting thought isn't it? Not flowers only, but fruit. What I remember of my Botany class is that you cannot have fruit without flowers and you cannot have flowers unless there was fruit to plant.

Perhaps, we need to consider what St. Bernard is talking about and how that might apply to our struggle to bear Good Fruit. The parable of the fig tree is about a tree that is just

existing or producing only flowers. There is not a completion of the work – the tree never becomes what God created it to be. We need both flowers and fruit

Our flowers are certainly our worship, the prayers we offer and the moments we spend contemplating the Divine. There is the flower of our Sacramental life as we celebrate and partake regularly in the Sacraments of the Church. And there is the flower which bridges the ordinary of life and our practice of religion, the orientation of our lives and the love we share with others.

In our day to day lives we plant flowers and we bear fruit. The flowers we plant and the fruit we bear are the many acts of kindness we offer to others and work we do which builds up the Kingdom of God. These acts, sometimes called Apostolic Acts, are so named because they mimic the work of the Apostles.

If you would like to contemplate these works and the work you might undertake, read and ponder the wonderful events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the early Church. Certainly, the best fruit is the offering not only of our own lives, but is sharing our faith so that another soul might be won for the Kingdom.

But before we get too caught up in the wonderful work we wish to do, remember where it begins.

*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Our work will be successful if we begin with the flowers of our prayer and praise.

If we recognize the need we have to offer to God our flowers and then depend on the Grace of His Holy Spirit to guide us and strengthen us, we will bear much fruit and one day we will hear from the Master, well done good and faithful servant.

AMEN