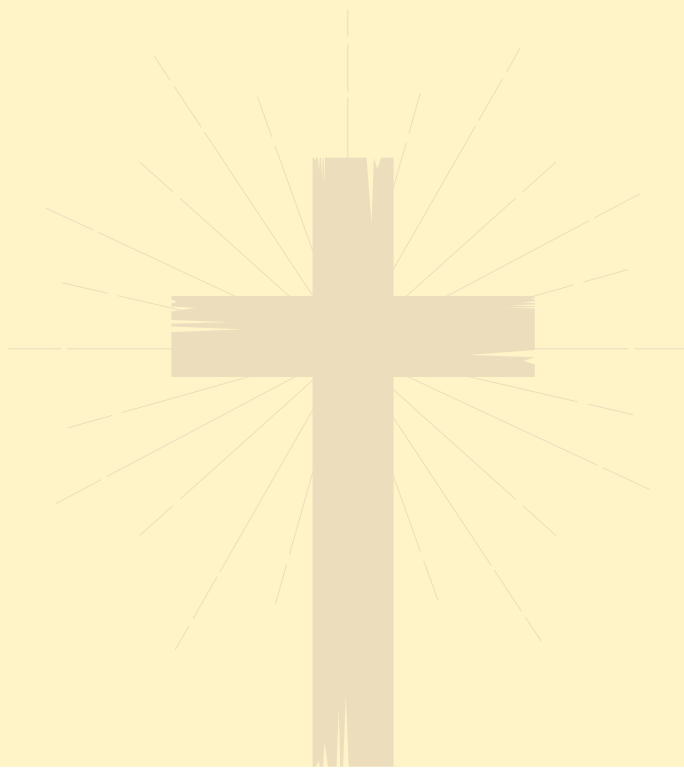


3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT, 20 MARCH 2022

# The Fruits of Repentance



## Message of *Laudato Si'*

For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation. "Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation".

*Laudato Si'* #235

*Take time to consider why we repent and what does it mean for us? Is it changing for the sake of changing, or does it stem from a recognition that there is a break or disharmony within us with others, creation, and God? Can our act of repentance lead to us being Christians who are life-giving, life-generating, in harmony with creation, and living lives according to the Spirit?*

### **GOSPEL – LUKE 13:1-9**

#### **'Leave the fig tree one more year'**

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.'"

## REFLECTION

The gospel reading offers an interesting insight about repentance, though Jesus did not make the connection directly. Our choices in our lives can lead us to bear fruit or make our spiritual lives barren when no life can grow. In Galatians 5, Saint Paul tells us that the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." He continues to say that if "we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25-26).

It is possible to live a life that bears no fruit. They are lives marked by imbalanced selfish desires. It is a life that seeks to gratify our worst instincts. They include "fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing" (Gal 5:19-21). However, now is still not too late to repent so that our life can bear fruit. The image of tree-bearing fruit can be an image of our lives that can be life-giving and life-affirming towards those around us. In walking by the Spirit, Saint Paul reminds us, "Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another" (Gal 5:26).

In this season of Lent, let us consider how our lives are bearing fruit. Let us be watchful that we do not get involved in a cycle of negativity, biting and devouring, until we consume one another.

The “whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14).

## LENTEN EXERCISE

One way that we can show our love in a way that can bear fruit is to show our concern to the public places in our area. Though we move, live, and have our being in God, we do so within the conditions of where we live. Can we consider actions that contribute to the common good? Pope Francis writes, “Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone” (*Laudato Si’* #232).

## MY STAND

- Cultivate an attitude that shows concern for the public places in your area. For instance, could there be a landscape that is being used as a dumping area?
- Show concern for your church as a building that everybody shares. Discuss with your priest that your BEC would like to plan an activity to clean, improve and even beautify a neglected part of your church grounds.
- Let us evaluate and dialogue about our attitudes and efforts on our care for the environment with our families, housemates, and even at our Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC). We can do this in three steps.
  - How have (we/ I) cultivated (our/ my) “ecological virtues” or (our/ my) orientation toward care for the environment?

- What have (we/ I) done well?
- Are there areas for improvement?
- If none of the above: How can I start today?



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