

"God loves me very much. He has done prodigies on my behalf, because of his mercy that always welcomes me. His love and his grace reach all people. As we are his children! As He never hesitates to give in abundance. We are the ones who do not know how to accept the hours of grace, we are the ones who cut the thread of His mercies with our lack of gratitude and generosity "

"There is nothing more pleasing to God than doing what He says in our lives, every day"

(St. Raphaela Mary)



Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, *"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."*

Then he told this parable: *"A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' "Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" (Lc. 13, 1-9)*

Jesus takes advantage of two sad events that just happened so that the Jews understand that such misfortunes are alien to the will of God and do not mean that one is a sinner. However, at the same time He encourages them to know how to read history from the perspective of God. One must know how to distinguish the signs of the times, because God speaks to us through historical events. Only if we are present in the world can we perceive them. Only from the Gospel can we decipher, in the signs of the times, the desire and will of God.

The Gospel tells us about the sterile fig tree: if it does not bear fruit, it is useless for it to take up space. A Church, a community that does not bear fruit has no reason to exist. In the parable, the God of life wants to cut down the fig tree. There is someone, the vinedresser -Jesus himself- who asks the master for a new opportunity. Jesus pleads for his people and for each Christian community, for each person in particular. He gives us a new opportunity and is committed to each one of us. Especially in Lent we are called to take a stance in regard to this patient love and the mission to which we are called: to make the kingdom of God a reality, we must decide.

*I say no; and, if you do not convert, you will all perish the same.*

What calls to conversion am I receiving at this moment in my life? What is God asking me here and now?

*One had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and went to look for fruit in it, and could not find it.*

Many times we are satisfied thinking that our task is to sow and preach, and we do not make an effort to see the fruits, to get down to reality and to verify the fruit of the sowing. The Gospel explicitly invites us to find them. What are the fruits that I have to give in my personal life, in my reference group, in my community, in the parish, in the environment in which I develop?

*Lord, leave it alone this year; I will dig around it and I will throw dung on it, to see if it bears fruit in the future.*

What means am I employing to continue growing and maturing in faith and to bear the fruits that conversion demands? What things do I have to remove, digging around, and what fertilizer, that is, what food should I procure?