

2019.03.24 Homily by Fr. Gabor

In today's readings two different plants are in the focus, a burning bush and a fruitless fig tree.

From the burning bush God speaks to Moses, while the fig tree seems to be useless, because it is not doing what it was planted for; it doesn't bear any fruit.

However very interestingly the burning bush is not consumed by the flames, which tells me that when a created thing is filled with God's presence it is not destroyed, but in fact it comes alive; it radiates warmth, light and energy, *just like the flames* and a bit like Jesus in his transfiguration as we read last week. The fig tree on the other hand seems to be the total opposite, therefore the owner of the vineyard, which often symbolises God, is about to cut it down.

The burning bush symbolises the Christian who is filled with God's presence, who is aflame with enthusiasm, who is fully alive; who doesn't shy away from helping out, but is eager to do something for God and His Church, while the fig tree is a symbol of the Christian who doesn't use its God given gifts to bear spiritual fruits, but sits back and merely uses up the nourishment He is given through the sacraments and through the love and care of other Christians; he doesn't give back anything; he doesn't bear any fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Which one describes you better; the burning bush or the fruitless fig tree?

If you feel more like the burning bush, that's great and wonderful. [Please speak to me after Mass and I will give you an idea for helping out in the Church.]

But what if you feel more like the fig tree? What can you do in that case? First of all it is important to find out why the fig tree doesn't bear fruit. From my studies I would say that if a plant doesn't bear fruit there can be three main reasons: either that there is not enough nourishment in the soil or the wrong nourishment is put into the soil, or not enough water, or the soil is poisoned with something. In any case the soil has to be investigated and find out what the actual situation is. This is what we call an examination of conscience.

If there is not enough nourishment in the soil, ie. not enough spiritual food in your soul, then it's time to look for it: anything that inspires you, a book or a song which touches your heart or even better, join a church group through which you feel nourished and encouraged to contribute to the life of the Church. If your soul is filled with the wrong nourishment, for example secular or materialistic ideas or negativity, then get rid of them, and follow what St. Paul says (in Phil 4:8-18): '*brothers and sisters, think about whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable ...*'. If there is not enough living water in the soil, which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, then pray to Him and ask Him every day to fill your heart and soul with the Father's love and with the seven gifts you have received; and if there is poison in the soul, ie. bad habits, negative thinking, anger, grudges against someone, selfishness, egoism, then do the opposite; forgive those who trespass against you; seek what is positive in others, pray for forgiveness for those who hurt you and think more of the needs of others.

However it is very important that you do all these things with all your minds and hearts and with all your strength. Otherwise all these actions will remain a mere mental exercise, which will never have a profound impact on your life. Only things that affect your hearts as well, will have a profound, transformative effect on you, because we tend to do what our hearts desire.

Finally trust that you can come alive, because nobody is a fig tree by default. We are images of the heavenly Father as the book of Genesis says (1:27). Therefore have faith that you can also become like the burning bush; a Christian who is fully alive, as St. Irenaeus says: 'The glory of God is man fully alive' (Book 4, Chapter 34, Section 7).