

Bearing Fruit

Those who are serious about the Christian life want to grow. They want to bear fruit. They feel a strong desire in their heart to draw closer to the Lord.

To bear fruit means many things in the life of a Christian. But imagine growing one hundredfold in prayer, one hundredfold in the virtues such as patience and humility or one hundredfold in loving our neighbor! Imagine how different we would be, how different St. Peter's would be and how different we would be!

But what are the obstacles that prevent us from growing as we ought? What are the types of rocky ground we can encounter which either kill the fruit or prevent it from fully flourishing?

The exodus story for our first reading today can give us an insight. See the Exodus journey is not just a story that happened many many years ago, but St Paul saw it as a reflection of the Christian life. If we heed the story of the Exodus we will realize that its truths pertain to us.

Context is everything for understanding this passage we hear today. Imagine that you are an Israelite and generations of your people have been put under cruel slavery for hundreds of years. But then you encounter the power of God through Moses. You see the plagues ravage Egypt, you see the Nile turn blood red, you see the sky completely darkened and you witness the death of every first born who did not consume the Passover lamb.

Then you literally walk through the Red Sea. You see right before your eyes the water receding and creating a pathway just for you and you see the Egyptians destroyed in their fury. What would be your response? Gratitude? Joy? How would you respond one month after?

How did the Israelites respond? They responded with two objections:

“if only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread;

For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

The two objections they raise are:

- 1) Desire for slavery: We wish we were back in slavery because at least we could eat our bread
- 2) Distrust of God: God was not trying to save us at all, he is just trying to kill us

The Christian life is very similar to this. We can have a radical conversion or powerful experiences of God which changes our life and we respond immediately with great joy and gratitude.

But when we begin to walk through the wilderness of purification we can fall back into the desire for slavery (Gee I kind of miss that old life. It seems a lot more fun than this life of discipline, repentance and self-denial. I kind of wish I was living back in slavery again....)

Or after we have experienced the abundance of God's love and mercy, we can begin to distrust him (wow, it seems like the closer I grow to God it seems like life actually gets harder. It doesn't seem like he is taking care of me anymore, and now I don't know if I even want to trust him anymore)

Those are the lies of the enemy. The same tactics he used with Adam and Eve he uses with the Israelites, he uses with you. He tries to make you miss what you don't have and tries to make you distrust God.

Therefore, if we truly desire to bear fruit, we must not abide in the rocky ground of desire for slavery and distrust in God but rather we must abide in Christ. By abiding in the soil of his Sacred Heart, we will truly bear the fruit he has called us to bear.

Whoever abides in me and I in him will bear much fruit.