

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily  
Sunday, October 8, 2023  
Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle A

There was a rich businessman who decided to landscape his grounds. He hired a woman with a doctorate in horticulture – or the art of garden cultivation and management. Because he was always very busy and traveling a lot, the rich man kept emphasizing to her the need to create his garden in a way that would require little or no maintenance on his part. He insisted on automatic sprinklers and other labor-saving devices. Finally, the woman stopped and said, “*There’s one thing* you need to deal with before we go any further. If there’s no gardener, then there’s no garden!”

There are no labor-saving devices for growing a garden of spiritual fruits. Becoming a person of spiritual fruitfulness requires time, attention and care. How many of us are like the rich man in the story? We are very busy during the week and get caught up in work and social activities and do not spend the time we need to work on our spiritual growth and welfare. And then we come to church on Sunday for “automatic sprinkling” of holy water. How many times during the week are we running low on spiritual food and do nothing about it?

The garden of our soul needs personal tending and caring. Its plants and flowers need constant watering and cultivating that we must do ourselves and not some “automated spiritual machine”. We have to personally encounter the Source of our life, and not be caught up working too hard to earn a living. We have to personally feed our spirit with the Word of God, and not be overloaded with the words and soundbites of the world. We have to personally receive the grace of God by opening ourselves to him and sharing in his life to make our lives spiritually fruitful.

I am talking about *spiritual fruitfulness*, because it is obviously connected to the gospel reading, we have just heard. Let me go straight to the moral of the gospel parable that Jesus gives us today – which can be found at the conclusion of the gospel reading: “The kingdom of God will be... given to people that will produce its fruit”.

Each of us must ask this question: **Does my life bear fruits? Does my life bear the fruit of love, the fruit of compassion, generosity and stewardship?**

All of us are capable of bearing fruit and of giving back to God because all of us have been given by God numerous gifts that we can use to perform the mission God entrusted to each of us. What is our mission? Each one of us has a mission to perform to be a channel of grace. And by doing this mission, we make our own lives and the lives of others fruitful.

**“The kingdom of God will be...given to people that will produce its fruit”. What are the fruits we must produce? Anything we do in imitation of Christ is a fruit we produce. Every step we take to follow the Lord, every act of selflessness in imitation of Jesus, is a fruit of the kingdom of God.**

When we serve as Jesus serves, forgive as he forgives, and love as he loves, we produce its fruit. When we minister to the least, the last and the lost, when we heal the wounded and the broken, when we show compassionate love to others, we are living in the kingdom of God now, we work for the kingdom of God and we produce fruits.

As Christians, we are to bear fruits...we are expected to be useful to God and valuable for his Kingdom. “*To be useful*” to God is to have a heart overflowing with love for others – that is, to love as God loves. So that as Christians may we bear the fruit of love – love that gives generously, love that serves unreservedly, love that forgives without limits.