

Homily -- Sisters of Charity of Incarnate Word

March 2, 2019

In today's gospel Jesus challenges us to bring forth a harvest of good fruit – individually, as a member of the community of faith, as a member of the Sisters of Charity of Incarnate Word. Jesus also says, “a good tree does not produce decayed fruit any more than a decayed tree produces good fruit. Each tree is known by its yield.”

When you look at a fruit tree and see lush green leaves and branches heavy with apples, you are assured that the tree is healthy and that your fertilizing and pruning have paid off. But when you look at a tree and see its leaves drooping in a time of drought, you worry that the tree is sick and needs an urgent remedy.

The Lord's words remind us that the world observes us in much the same way! When our neighbors see us visiting an elderly person and helping her with chores, they conclude that our faith has taken root in us. When they observe us collecting food for the poor or providing shelter for the homeless, visiting the sick, or defending a neighbor against gossip, they infer that our faith is healthy and the church is alive here.

But if they observe us fighting with one another, slandering a co-worker, expressing selfish or greedy attitudes, or exhibiting racial prejudice, they may well ask themselves, “Is she not supposed to be a Christian? Does she not belong to the Catholic Church? Is she not a consecrated woman?”

As members of the community of faith, we have been angered, frustrated, and sickened by the instances of sexual abuse of minors, especially by priests and some bishops. We also exhibit alienating differences and polarization within the Church that diminish the good fruit we are expected to bear. Jesus says: Good persons produce goodness from the good of their hearts. Evil persons produce evil out of their store of evil. Everyone speaks out of the abundance of love in his or her heart.

On your anniversary my prayer is that we will look honestly and discover the reservoir of goodness that God has given to each of us. May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom, strength, and courage to allow that goodness to influence all we say or do. Our Lady of Guadalupe will show us the way to bring diverse people into unity.