

Faith and Disappointment

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

We live in a world filled with unexplainable calamities. Natural disasters devastate entire communities, claiming lives without discrimination. Disease afflicts the young and healthy alongside the old and frail. Acts of violence and injustice leave us questioning why such suffering exists. In moments like these, it's natural to wonder, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Or, perhaps more painfully, "Why does God allow this?"

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus offers us the parable of the fruitless fig tree (Luke 13:1-9), a story that speaks to the mysteries of suffering and hope in the face of disappointment. The fig tree's owner sees no fruit and is ready to give up, declaring the tree a lost cause. Yet the gardener steps in with a different perspective. He doesn't judge the tree harshly, nor does he let frustration overwhelm him. Instead, he rolls up his sleeves, grabs a shovel, and gets to work.

Here's the remarkable part: it's not the tree that needs to change; it's the owner of the fig tree whose mind the gardener is trying to transform. The gardener invites him—and us—to look at the tree with hope and patience. He calls us to trust that, even in barrenness, life can bloom again if nurtured with care.

The gardener's actions challenge us to adopt a practical, hands-on faith. He doesn't waste time assigning blame or becoming self-righteous about why the tree hasn't borne fruit. Instead, he dives into the muck, digging around the roots and fertilizing the soil. His actions remind us that our response to life's challenges is what matters most.

When tragedy strikes, the question is not "Why did this happen?" but "What can I do?" The gardener reminds us that faith is not about standing on the sidelines, paralyzed by fear or despair. Faith is about action—getting involved, ministering to those in need, and trusting that God is working even when we cannot see the fruit.

Jesus also warns us not to blame the victims of tragedy or assume their suffering is due to sin. He references the collapse of the Tower of Siloam and the Galileans killed by Pilate, urging us to see these events not as punishments but as reminders of life's fragility and the need for repentance. Rather than cowering behind closed doors in fear of the next calamity, Jesus calls us to live boldly, trusting in God's care.

Each morning, we have a choice: to despair over what we cannot control or to face the day with faith. With the gardener by our side, we can say, "Whatever comes my way, I will stand firm. My joy will be magnified because I trust in God's goodness. My sorrow will be transformed because I walk with Christ."

Let us listen to the gardener's voice and embrace a faith that gets its hands dirty, transforming barren branches into vessels of God's grace. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy