

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, February 27, 2022

Give Us This Joyful Season

Written by Br. Silas Henderson

Sirach 27:4-7

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45



It seems that, in many ways, we would be hard-pressed to have better readings for the Sunday before Lent begins. These teachings of Jesus—on judging others and the fruitfulness of our lives—help round out the sixth chapter of Luke and what we now know as Jesus’ “sermon on the plain.” Here, we find Jesus inviting us to reflect on the movements taking place within our minds and hearts, particularly with regard to how we relate to other people.

The Season of Lent is a time for Christians to “get back to basics,” focusing on the quality of our discipleship. This means that Lent isn’t an end in itself. Rather, Lent—which comes from an Old English word meaning “springtime” — is ultimately oriented toward our celebrations of the Resurrection at Easter and our renewal of our Baptism Promises on Easter Sunday. We are reminded of this by the words of the Mass, as we recall that God “gives us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed... as we recall the great events that gave us new life in Christ” (Preface of Lent I).

As we know, the traditional *bona opera* (“good works”) of Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These actions focus our attention on what is most important in our

relationships with God and others, while enabling us to set aside some of the “stuff” that consumes our time and energy, or which distract us from what is truly important. To that end, this [Sunday's First Reading and Gospel](#) can help reflect on the movements of our heart that should guide these acts of penance and charity, especially as we think about what might be obscuring our spiritual vision and preventing us from recognizing the sometimes-hard truths about where we might be in our journey of faith and commitment to follow Jesus on the path of conversion.

With this in mind, we can also look to our Second Reading, taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians as a reminder that the grace of conversion called for by the Season of Lent comes to us only through the victory of Christ and it is by this grace that we know “that in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain” ([1 Corinthians 15:58](#)). As Pope Francis reflected in his 2019 [Message for Lent](#): “Let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain! Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion. Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them. In this way, by concretely welcoming Christ's victory over sin and death into our lives, we will also radiate its transforming power to all creation.”

In essence, these readings are inviting us to look at our lives and on the realities of the world around us with clear eyes (see [Luke 6:41-42](#)) and to reflect on the fruit of our lives. Are there areas in our lives that need to be more carefully nurtured and tended? Are their “branches” that need to be pruned, so that other areas of our lives — including our prayer and ministry — can be more fruitful? How can we more effectively respond to the needs of those around us, sharing our time, talent, and material goods to help others to bear greater fruit in their own lives?

Br. Silas Henderson

PRAYER

Grant us, O Lord, we pray,
that the course of our world
may be directed by your peaceful rule
and that your Church may rejoice,
untroubled in her devotion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(from *The Roman Missal*)