Know the Tree by Its Fruits

Daily Gospel / Liturgycal Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 6:43-49.
Jesus said to his disciples: “A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed.”

Luke 6:43-49

Introductory Prayer:
Lord, here I am again spending time in prayer. I am going to meditate on your word. I do not want to be one of those people who cries out “Lord, Lord” but never does what you say. You know too well how weak I am, how many times I have trusted in my own strength and left you to one side. I come to you today in humility to ask for your light and your grace.

Petition:
Lord, help me to build my life on a firm foundation.

1. Good Fruit from a Good Tree:
How will we know what lies deep down in our souls? We will know from the kind of fruit we produce. If our lives are examples of charity, faith, patience and honesty, we know that our soul is healthy and strong. If our lives are examples of anger, envy, lust, selfishness or laziness, then we know that there is a weak and sickly soul inside. If we want to change, we cannot simply try to change the appearances – to put on a nice face or pretend to be a good person. Sooner or later the mask will fall, because it is only hiding something rotten inside. We must change from within, go deep down to the root of our defects, heal our soul in the sacrament of penance, and work to build a life of virtue from the very foundation.

2. False Security:
When the sun is shining and all is calm, a house built on a weak foundation seems very strong and sturdy. It is hard to believe that it will not withstand the force of rain, wind and floods. We sometimes have a false security in our lives when all is going well. When there are no big temptations, when the trials and difficulties of life are small and easily overcome, we can convince ourselves that we are on solid ground. We can be lulled into thinking that our spiritual life is strong and that we will never fall into sin as we have in the past. We must be careful and very objective because this may be a false security.

3. The Test:
The true test of the foundation comes when the rain starts, the wind blows and the floodwaters rise. The test of our spiritual lives comes with temptations, difficulties, disappointments and trials. If we have built our spiritual lives on a firm foundation of virtue, self-denial and union with God, it does not matter how hard the floods come down against us: We will stand firm. We must keep in mind that in the moment of the flood we will not be able to go out to fix the foundation. It will be too late. We must work on building a strong foundation while the sun is shining so we will be ready for the test. We must act on the words of Christ now, in this moment, while there still is time.

Conversation with Christ:
Lord, do not let me be lulled into a false sense of security just because my life is not so difficult in this moment. I want to be ready for the test. I want to be ready when the floods come. Help me to work today to strengthen the foundation of my spiritual life. Help me to grow in virtue.

Resolution:
I will concentrate today on practicing one virtue that I know I need to work on.