

The Same Old Thing

(from a homily by Father Robert Dunn, St. Augustine Parish, Ossining, NY see

<http://www.pipeline.com/~rdunn/Homilies.htm>)

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Reader 1:

People, at one point or another, get tired. The parent gets fed up telling the child to clean their room. The student gets bored with the same old tests. The worker is numbed by the same monotonous job. It's just something in our nature. We seem to grab the familiar and lose interest. Still, we know there is something better and different. It sounds like a contradiction: we are people who live routine but who always want new things. It's frustrating, isn't it? We pledge that we will do better and decide to do it the same. The student in September, the dieter on New Year's, the Christian on Ash Wednesday – it can all be too much the same.

Reader 2:

Now, imagine, how God feels. Imagine a God who revealed Himself as Being Itself to human beings. Prophet after prophet, miracle after miracle – and what? Things seem to be the same. Year after year, prayer after prayer, the people He loves haven't gotten too much worse or better. We can imagine something like a divine frustration with us – even though God is God and not frustrated. Still, it's that whole 'free will' thing again. When He gave it to us, He was setting Himself up for disappointment. His most divine attribute was given to us who are merely mortal. Some of us have made poor use of that free will. All of us have been reckless with it. But its danger is not in what we choose to do badly. Its danger lies in what we don't choose to do at all.

Reader 3:

Graduates are told that the world is their oyster. If that were the case, the streets would be lined with pearls. Somewhere between the diploma and the retirement absolutely nothing happens. There are moments when opportunity knocks but we are too busy playing our own song. Occasionally we do something remarkable in those moments of clarity but soon settle back into our routine. Our faith life is not much different. If we are honest, we have to be frustrated. We have to be annoyed by our shortcomings and laziness. We are dismayed by our leaders and miffed by our habitual failures. We hear the same old thing and settle into the same old sins. When it comes to the spiritual life, we are creatures of habit and create little that is new.....

Reader 4: GOSPEL READING: Luke 13: 6-9

"There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found

none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

Reader 5:

So do we throw it all away? Do we just throw up our hands and say 'forget about it'? Does God do that with us? If the divine response to human mediocrity was dismissal, we'd all be out of hope.

The gardener says to the frustrated owner, 'leave it be.' That is the similar expression for forgiveness and mercy. 'Cut it down' is an expression of judgment and condemnation. The Divine gardener says the same to us. Don't cut down another person because they are not producing the change you want. Don't give up on the work God is doing in yourself. Drop the condemnation and forget the self-destruction. The Gardener will cultivate and encourage us. From all that we go through each day, He will fertilize our lives..... From the compost heap that life can be, real progress can be made. Actively or passively, God is irritating. He just refuses to stop hoping and working. What should normally be fruitful is barren and that is not acceptable to the creator of the universe.....

Reader 6:

It is the interplay of a vision of holiness and the burden of reality. We are all, to some degree, engaged in this struggle. If are we not, then our faith has wilted or we are dead. Few human beings, and still fewer Christians, fail to see that contrast within themselves. This is the struggle of the desert. We use the images and similarities of human life to mirror the battle within as we encounter our weaker selves and our loving God. Whether a faint reminder or a spiritual stumbling block, we all come before the intersection of our destiny and our failure. This is our cross as much as it was God's.

Reader 7:

Do not fear the cross. The fruitless wood of a tree can become the vehicle of salvation. Perhaps not in a way we could envision it, but always in the way God can use it. We are not perfect and never will be. Neither will anyone else. But God is not finished with us. We can give up or give up on each other, but God refuses to. The dry and barren dirt is God's holy ground. He has often enough revealed Himself there and continues to do so. He has turned the desert into gardens before. He can and will do so again. Look inside at the tangled weeds of sin and barren branches of virtues forsaken. See the poisonous vines of monotony and the dried up pools of grace and you will find what God is prepared to make beautiful.

As much as we would like to and as much as we would even prefer, we do not have the authority to give up. God still has work to do. With tools in hand, here He comes.....

(Pause for intentions.)

Leader: Our Father

All: who art in heaven . . .

Leader: St. John Baptist de La Salle

All: Pray for us.

Leader: Live, Jesus, in our hearts

All: Forever!

Arranged by Brother Michael Livaudais, FSC