

Friday of The First Week of Great Lent

“Rerun of Little Red Riding-Hood” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Wednesday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time by Father Edward McIlmail, LC– [Audio Version](#) * - Matthew 7:15-20)

Matthew 7: 13-29 - Jesus said to his disciples: “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So, by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell — and great was its fall!”

Introductory Prayer: Lord, before I can produce anything lasting in my life, I need to be united to you in prayer. Aware of my weakness and inclination to sin, I trust all the more in your forgiveness and mercy. I believe in your presence in the Eucharist. It gives me the assurances that you really are with your Church until the end of time.

Petition: Lord, help me to see more easily the goodness in people around me.

1. **Wolves in Sheepskins:** Today we abound with information, but are short on guidance. The media tell us that abortion is OK, that stem-cell research on human

embryos is compassionate, that same-sex marriage equals tolerance. Wayward faithful ignore or insult papal teachings. “The time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). How do I judge what I hear day by day? How do I gauge what the media tell me? Do I absorb everything I hear like a sponge? Or do I try to find out what the Church says on issues? Am I aware of how much the media can steal my interior peace? That it can leave me thinking in a very worldly way?

2. See The Fruits: Our Lord gives us a good criterion for gauging the work of other people: We are to look at what they produce. The people we see daily on television — do their lives seem peaceful and happy? Are their families stable? Often, the most stable among us are those who live low-key lives. God often chooses to work outside of the spotlight. He works in those families that quietly raise their children in the faith. What lasting fruits am I producing for God? If married, have I been open to new life? If single, do I dedicate a fair amount of time to serving others? Do I help my friends learn about Christ? Do I help worthwhile charities?

3. Misjudging: The problem of judging can go the other direction. We might think that someone isn't a good person, or that he isn't very talented. Yet we are surprised, sometimes years later, to find that same person living in a near-perfect marriage, raising a happy family, or producing a thriving work of charity. Was our initial judgment faulty? If so, why? Do we recognize and appreciate virtue in others? Or are we fixated on the externals: Their looks? Their wealth? Their bubbly personality? What does that say about *my* hierarchy of values?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I am surrounded by views of the world — so many opinions, so much information. I sometimes feel overwhelmed. Let me see in your vicar on earth, the Pope, the safe and sure path to follow in the midst of confusion.

Resolution: I will compliment someone for the hidden, but lasting, work they are doing for the Kingdom.

** The Gospel read in the Maronite Catholic Church is from Matthew 7:13-27 which is read in different segments over 3 days in the Roman Catholic Church. The meditation above is based on Matthew 7:15-20. Below you can find one Gospel Meditation based on Matthew 7:21-29 and one based on Matthew 7:6, 12-14*

Built Wisely ” (based on Regnum Christi Meditation for Thursday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time by Father Edward McIlmail, LC– [Audio Version](#) - Matthew 7:21-29)

Jesus said to his disciples: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell — and great was its fall!” Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, before I can produce anything lasting in my life, I need to be united to you in prayer. Aware of my weakness and inclination to sin, I trust all the more in your forgiveness and mercy. I believe in your presence in the Eucharist. It gives me the assurances that you really are with your Church until the end of time.

Petition: Lord, help me to improve one point of my life that has been neglected.

1. **Lord, Lord:** “Faith without works is useless” (James 2:20). Witnessing to our faith through our works is crucial. It’s not enough to go to Mass on Sunday, to have the Bible on the shelf, to hang a rosary on the rearview mirror. Faith in Christ means daily conversion, changing our lives in conformity to his will. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Doing the will of the Father means works of charity, of patience, of disinterested service. Real expressions of our faith demand that we give of ourselves. Real faith doesn’t leave us feeling smug. Do I ever feel self-righteous because “I’m with the Pope”? Because I “never got caught” doing something wrong? Does my faith in Christ leave me complacent? Or does it drive me to works of charity?
2. **Rock Solid:** Listening to and following Christ means living as we should. There is a truth about our being human that demands a response. To know, love and serve God in this world, and to be happy with him forever in the next, sums up the purpose of our lives (see Catechism, No. 1). When we sin, we break not only with Christ but with ourselves. We feel divided interiorly by our passions, our anger, our vanity, our greed. Christ invites us to “come home,” to be what we were meant to be. That is the surest foundation we can have when a crisis strikes. Where am I “building on sand”? Is my prayer life weak? Am I stingy with my possessions? Hardhearted toward a family member?
3. **Façade:** We can surmise that the house built on sand looked sturdy — that is why no one thought to test its strength before the big storm arrived. Our lives can be the same way. In a time of calm everything seems OK. No cares, no fears. Everything looks good on the outside, like those old Hollywood movie sets: all façade, but no depth. Beneath the surface, however, there might lie decay, chronic problems, issues that aren’t resolved, emptiness — all because Christ isn’t the center of our lives. Are there areas of my life where I’m living superficially? Am I just putting up appearances for the neighbors? My parents? My spouse? My sweetheart? My pastor? What problems do I need to weed out of my life?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, you love me too much to stand by and let me live my life on the surface. You know it is difficult for me to give up my mask, because it is never easy for me to face my weaknesses. Give me the strength to confront what I need to change in my life.

Resolution: I will note one area where I'm not living up to the public image I present. Then I will offer up a decade of the rosary to overcome that vice or weakness.

“The Difficult Path” (based on Regnum Christi Meditation for Tuesday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time by Father Edward McIlmail, LC– [Audio Version](#) - Matthew 7:6, 12-14)

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces. Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.”

Introductory Prayer: I believe in the power of prayer, Lord. This time spent with you is the most important time of my day. Let me be confident of your presence and your love, in order to take full advantage of these privileged moments.

Petition: Lord, help me appreciate better the beauty of the Christian faith.

1. **Our True Values:** We take great care to guard what is most valuable to us, right? The truth is, we often take great risks with what is most precious. We say we value life and limb but think nothing of speeding in heavy traffic. We say we want to get to heaven, but we dabble in sin, even serious sin, almost daily. We surf racy Web sites. We cut down people in office gossip. We close our hearts to the needy. We habitually vote for politicians who defend abortion. We take sin oh-so-lightly. Likewise, we might let the holy things of our faith languish. We might neglect the sacrament of reconciliation. We receive Communion unworthily. We stay silent when a relative brags about using contraception. We do nothing when a child withdraws into the world of Internet for five hours a day. Is there something about which I should be speaking up?
2. **Do unto Others:** To decide what to do in any given situation, we can ask ourselves how we would like to be treated. “For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you” (Luke 6:38). The respect we have for ourselves is often reflected in the respect we show others. Rudeness, indifference and irritability toward others bespeak a problem in us. The Golden Rule isn't just for others; it is also to guard our own dignity. Are there people toward whom I am routinely uncharitable? Do I realize that this lack of charity can hurt my character more than it hurts their feelings?
3. **The Broad Road and the Narrow Gate:** Modernity is like a 24/7 convenience store. We can get anything, anytime. We can end up thinking that everything about life should be easy, be it marriage, self-discipline or even our salvation. The illusion of ease shouldn't fool us. Working toward our salvation is challenging work. Original sin left a deep mark on all of us. Struggling toward salvation takes prayer, sacrifice and constant vigilance. Do I sense that the living of my faith in today's world is easy? If so, I'm probably not living it well. Where have I avoided the narrow road of holiness? Am I too attached to food, clothes or the opinions of others?

Conversation with Christ: Help me to see, Lord, that my real dignity lies in treating others well, and in renouncing my disordered passions. Let me shake off mediocrity in my spiritual life and make the most of the time you give me.

Resolution: Today, I will make a special sacrifice for a loved one.