

Saturday of the Second Week of Great Lent

“Jesus and the Fig Tree” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Friday of the Eighth Week of Ordinary Time by Father John Doyle, LC Mark 11:11-26 – [Audio version*](#))

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it. Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the Temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the Temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple. He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city. In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

Introductory Prayer: Once again, Lord, I come to you to pray. Even though I cannot see you, I trust that you are present and want very much to instruct me in your teachings. In the same way you demonstrate your love me by spending this time with me, I want to express my love for you by dedicating this time with you in a spirit of faith, confidence and attention. Here I am, Lord, to listen to you and respond with love.

Petition: Lord Jesus help me to learn how to unite prayer and action.

- 1. Jesus and the Fig Tree:** We witness Jesus withering a barren fig tree right down to its roots even though he knows that it is not the time for harvesting figs. Jesus never worked a miracle for himself, so we know it was not a punishment for not satisfying his hunger. This event immediately precedes his entering the Temple at Jerusalem where he expects to find people “busy about his Father’s affairs.” Instead he finds them occupied in worldly activity, and often fraudulent and unjust activity at that. The fruits of honesty and uprightness that Jesus expects to find are simply not there; so in a sense the fig tree symbolizes Jerusalem. Am I honest in my dealings with others? Do I realize that the Lord expects me to bear fruit? Do I invest my time well, in both prayer and action, to this end?
- 2. All in a Day’s Work:** This Gospel passage would make for a good documentary on a day in the life of Christ. He starts out early from Bethany to Jerusalem, he enters the Temple, faces the wrath of those there as he cleanses it, and then teaches for the rest of the day before returning to Bethany late in the evening. The very next day he begins his ministry again by teaching on the importance of faith in prayer. Jesus did not waste a second of his day; rather, he went about fulfilling his Father’s will. Still, Jesus was not a busybody. He did not generally meddle in others’ affairs, but he certainly was not about to allow worldly activity of a dishonest nature in his Father’s house. And so, he throws the dishonest merchants out of Temple. Do I use my time well? Does that include the time I dedicate to prayer? Do I always act respectfully in God’s house where my Eucharistic Lord dwells?
- 3. Praying with Faith:** Prayer and action are intimately tied together. Jesus was right in driving the moneychangers and animals from the Temple. Certainly, we’re not supposed to busy ourselves with worldly affairs while we’re in church. But it’s very proper to bring our worries and concerns, our joys, successes and failures to Christ in prayer. It’s good for us to ask Our Lord his viewpoint about our concerns and ask for his grace to continue on. And when we do set aside time specifically for prayer to encounter Christ, then we find the strength and desire to spread his message to others. It’s through prayer that we’re filled with apostolic zeal. When we dedicate our day to loving service of God, our day itself becomes a prayer. Is my prayer the source of interior strength, and is my action a loving prayer?

Conversation with Christ: My Jesus, you ask much of me, but you are always at my side assisting me with your grace and presence. Help me to use my time wisely on behalf of your Kingdom.

Resolution: I will program in five extra minutes of prayer today for the sake of serving Christ better.

**The Gospel read in the Maronite Church on Saturday of the second week of Great Lent is Mark 11:19-25 while the audio version and the meditation above are based on Mark 11:11-26.*