
24 March 2019

St. John Vianney Seminary Sunday Homily
Fr Sbusiso Zulu

“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ” What kind of a fig tree are you?

The Liturgy of this Sunday presents us with the theme of repentance. It comes as a result of those who come to Jesus and relate to Him a certain painful incident which happened to the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus answers by saying, *“Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.-*

Those reporting the story to Jesus expected Him to be **judgemental** on these people. Jewish people at that time believed that an unfortunate incident happens on the person because of his sins and faults. On the contrary He is telling them that the same fate will happen to them if they don't repent. He even goes further to relate to another incident of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them that they were not worse offenders than all who dwelt in Jerusalem. The same fate will happen to them if they do not repent. This is a warning to **Judgemental people who only see wrong in others, and not in them. These will also die because they don't have time to do introspection on their lives, and change what needs to be changed. They point fingers at other people not knowing that, that person might have fixed his problem with the Lord.**

This reminds me of a story of one person who used to drink a lot. The priest was saying: the gossipers will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and he would shout: ‘Batshela Mfundisi’. And liars won't see God, (Batshela Mfundisi. And drunkards, “O dakiwe kanti”.

Jesus in His response warns us of **self-righteousness**, that seeks to see wrong in other people whereas we also have our own weaknesses that need our attention and action. He warns people who are quick to judge others. For instance He is challenging you and me to change this this attitude, and focus on our very selves. I **might be sitting on a sin or sins that I keep on doing now and again**, and at the same pointing fingers at other Seminarians whom I think are worse than me, maybe because I'm diplomatic than they, I make sure that I'm not seen.

We all know our own weakness or sin that we find it difficult to desist from doing it, but find it easy to gossip about other people. I find it easy to destroy their lives or future. Unless I repent from that I will die. I may be living a **double standard of life**: during the day I am a Christian, at night I may be something else doing shameful things alone, or with other person and I know we understand what I'm talking about. I may be a **fornicator** (I don't mean I'm one,) or an adulterer and I don't want to change from this. All I know is to see the wrongs of other people to a point that I report them to the authorities so that unfortunate actions are taken against them when even I have weaknesses that are even worse than those of that person. Jesus has got one message for all of us, **'Unless you repent you will die in your sins.'**

Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is about conversion and repentance each and every day. But what is good with our Lord is that He gives us opportunity to do introspection on our faith, and the parable of the fig tree He makes in the end shows that **God is merciful** and kind; He gives us an opportunity. He is patient all the time for us waiting for us to repent. In this parable He speaks of the fig tree planted in the landlord's vineyard which didn't produce fruit for three years and he wanted to cut it down. The vinedresser pleaded for it and said, *"Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."*

The landlord in this parable is God **the Father**, and the vinedresser who intercedes on behalf of the vine is **Jesus** and the fig is **humanity**. Jesus intercedes or pleads with the Father to extend the space, the time of conversion. So the question is what kind of a fig am I? Do I bear fruit? Do I think the kind of a behaviour God likes? Conversion will be an answer to this. If I really converted the words of St. Paul which says, **'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.'** 2 Cor 5:17

What kinds of fruit do I bear? Sour or sweet? Sour in a sense that I'm like a snake that seeks an evil that lacks love of a brother, instead looking for the ways that I may bring him down. Wherever, I am, do I sow seeds of love or division? Do I tend to be at ease with a certain group? Divisions in clergy and seminarians based on interest not on the Love of God. Division in family members and areas of work. Am I an instruments of God's love and peace who brings solution to problems of humanity or I'm the one creating discord. **Unless we do repent we will die in our sins.**