26th Sunday on OT – Farm Mass

Sept. 27

We are here at the Harvest Mass and we celebrate God's gifts through the fruits of the earth, but also the growth we see in our brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes growth and new life takes time and it is not always how we expect it to come about.

When it comes to harvests or gardening we sometimes learn through the unexpected.

When I was younger and first learned about types of plants / flowers, you have the perennials and annuals. When considering the words at first, one would think the annuals are those that come back each year, but they are not, it is the perennials.

In our Gospel we hear the parable of the two sons. One who said he would not follow his father's command, yet later he choose to do so and the other who said, yes, he would work in the vineyard, but does not follow through.

Some see these sons to be images of Adam and the new Adam, Jesus. One who would seem to follow the Father's will but did not and the other who was unknown to the people of his time and gave all to follow the Father's will.

Adam, who made in the image and likeness of God, grasps at divinity, at equality with God. The temptation of the serpent was to be "like" God. The fall of humanity consists at a grasping at equality with God.

In Jesus we see God, letting go of equality with God, God emptying himself so as to meet fallen humanity. This is the poetry of Christianity.

Pride vs. humility.

Bishop Barron – "The humility of God even to the point of death on a cross. Why? So as to counteract the hubris of man, expressed in grasping in at divinity."

Our share in the divine life is a free gift, initiated by God, not something grasped at that we take for ourselves.

"Found human in appearance he humbled himself" Christ willing emptied himself. "Becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

For those in the first century, the worst death, would be death on a cross.

Jesus' self-emptying (Greek – kenosis) is to meet all forms of human woundedness, failure and sin. To bring divine grace to every stop along the way even into death itself.

Paul – "Because of this God greatly exalted him…"

In the resurrection He brings back to the Father all he grasped if we hold on to our Lord by cooperating with the grace he gives us.

Paul wants us aligned with Christ. "Have in you the same attitude (mind) in you that is in Christ."

This personal responsibility is seen in our first reading as well. Looking at the context, earlier in the chapter, we discover that the people of Israel whom Ezekiel addresses have adopted a concept that one's fate in life was already determined by the righteousness or wickedness of one's parents. The people were explaining their current setbacks as divine punishment for the faults of the previous generation.

When Ezekiel tries to preach personal accountability, that each individual receives the punishment or reward for his or her own actions, the people complain that God's way is not fair.

Ezekiel calls us to take responsibility for our actions, to repent of our sins, and to turn to God and receive life.

Ezekiel speaks of the evildoer dying and the righteous man living. This is the same life and death discussed in Genesis 2-3 and by Jesus in John 6: spiritual and eternal life.

Gospel we are see two groups that correspond to the two groups described by Ezekiel in the first reading and the two sons: virtuous ones who turn away and wicked ones who repent.

The tax collectors and prostitutes of whom Jesus is speaking are those who repented and changed their lifestyle at the preaching of John the Baptist. The Pharisees had been trained in virtue from their youth, but some gave lip service to the principles.

The fruits of repentance brought by John should have authenticated his ministry in the eyes of the Pharisees.

Sometimes we find ourselves in our walk with the Lord to be more like one son or the other, more willing to follow His will or more willing to go a different direction.

The Good News is the "mercies" of God, that in order to forgive the repentant, he gives himself completely for us and to us, having taken the form of a man, then the form of a slave, then the form of bread. It is through his life in us that we remain faithful and bear fruit.

We find new life in what would from the outside seem to be the most unexpected places.