

Homily - Dec 5, 2020

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We gather to celebrate and be thankful for God's work in our world, a work that is not yet done. (using the Amaryllis bulb-plant with blossoms about to pop) This flower reminds me of our Advent mode. We are happy to see the red blossom begin to appear, while we wait for the full blossom to appear. So, too, we wait for a better world with hope sparked and supported by visions of the prophets, especially like Isaiah, during this Advent time. However, we honest need to acknowledge and repent from recurring pessimism and impatience as we confidently call upon our compassionate God.

As I prepared this homily, I suddenly realized that previously I latched on to this Gospel's word "laborers." Why of course, we must be laborers to further the kingdom of God. Now I see more clearly that the laborers are harvesters. That means there is already something to harvest. Harvesting is gathering the good produce of this world—the results of God's great work.

So let's put on our farmer's hat (homilist Fr. Virgil puts on a straw hat). I am a farm kid from Central Minnesota. This hat represents two major roles or activities of farmers. They wait even while they begin to harvest some crops. They harvest hay while waiting for the oats to ripen. They cultivate the corn which will ripen in the fall. Mom harvested luscious peas from her garden while waiting for the cucumbers to blossom and bear fruit later.

These two farm activities and the patience demanded, describe our best Advent stances. While we wait for something better in the midst of the messiness of this world, there is great need to gratefully and joyfully harvest—not literally harvest oats, wheat or pumpkins and apples. Rather, we must become aware of the fruits of God's work as they appear in our troubled and unfinished world. I think Jesus is inviting us to be hope-filled harvesters in the midst of rising pandemic numbers; in the midst of medical personnel's energies and talents being taxed to the hilt; in the midst of justice struggles; in the midst of peoples' attempts to understand as well as to deny systemic racism; in the midst of election results still not completely settled and still prompting further division. Amid these and other kinds of messiness, God asks for us to be harvesters—to be reapers and gathers of good fruit that already exists.

Those fruits are the results of God's labor of love transcribed into the labors of love by our sisters and brothers and by ourselves. What might such fruit look like? One such fruit is the result of incredibly hard work by many scientists in various parts of the world these days. They have already succeeded in only ten months in discovering and beginning to produce some rather effective vaccines against the renegade COVID-19

virus. Creating vaccines in the past has sometimes taken years, as in the case of polio, and several other diseases.

A second might be the fact that there are people on both political sides who are standing up for our Constitutions and democracy rather than being swayed by their own personal interests or that of others. May their fruit result in the riper fruit of a peaceful United States.

I invite you and me to continue our task of harvesting God's produce by acknowledging more examples of God's precious fruits already present in our world, as we simultaneously hold onto and rejoice in Isaiah's grand visions of a new world. By such harvesting of God's goodness we will have the hope needed to actively await and further cooperate in the fulfillment of God's great and mighty works among and through us.

Jesus said, "Make this proclamation, **'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**" So "hats off" to the oncoming Kingdom of God!