

# Homily

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022 – The Fifth Sunday of Easter**

*Acts 11:1-18, Psalm 148, Revelation 21:1-6, John 13:31-35*

Once upon a time, in a faraway land. A man planted a fruit tree in a forest. At first the little fruit tree felt lost in the midst of so many great trees. The sight of those mighty trees made it feel insignificant. They were so tall, strong, and useful. It was small, weak and useless. So what did it do? It set about gaining a place and a standing for itself in the forest.

How hard it worked and how well it succeeded! In time its head reached up into the sky so that it was able to hobnob with the tallest trees of the forest. Its branches spread out like a giant umbrella, claiming more and more space for themselves. Its trunk grew stout and strong so that it was able to laugh at the storms which from time to time roared through the forest.

But then one day the man who planted it made an unexpected appearance in the forest. Looking at the tree, he said, “How you’ve grown! Why, you have the most wonderful branches I’ve ever seen. And your trunk is like the outer wall of a castle.”

“But I still have faults,” said the tree, feigning humility. “Just look at all these hollows, clefts and knots. If only I could rid myself of them, I’d look a whole lot better. But I’m working on them.”

“Those faults are of no concern to me. In fact, I don’t even see them as faults,” the man replied. On hearing this the tree began to glow with pride. But then the man added, “However, there is one thing I’m not happy with.”

“Oh, so you’re not happy with me,” the tree responded, suddenly becoming defensive. “I don’t understand. You can see for yourself how I have prospered. I can hold my own with the oaks, the elms and the gums. I thought you might be proud of me. I’ve worked so hard to secure the standing I now enjoy amongst the other trees.”

“I don’t doubt for one minute that you’ve worked hard,” said he.

“Well then, what more do you want from me?”

“The one thing I hoped to find in you is missing,” he replied. “You’ve neglected the most important thing of all, the one thing necessary.”

“What’s that?” asked the tree disconsolately.

“Fruit,” came the reply. “You are not an oak or an elm or a gum. You are something far rarer and more precious. You are a fruit tree. I was depending on you to provide wholesome fruit for the many famished creatures who roam the forest. But you have failed to do so because you have forgotten what you are. You have become just another tress in the forest.”

The one thing Jesus has commanded us to do is to love one another. It is anew commandment only in the sense that it sets a new standard, “as I have loved you.” Often Christians have gone after worldly success, and in many cases have achieved it. But in doing so they have forgotten the one thing Jesus expects from them, namely, love. “By this all will know that you are my disciples.”

Love makes us instruments of God’s providence in the lives of others. Our love becomes the channel through which they will experience the love of God. A journalist, watching Mother Teresa of Calcutta as she cared for a man with gangrene, remarked, “I wouldn’t do that for a million dollars.” Mother Teresa replied: “Even I wouldn’t do it for that amount. However, I do it out of love for God.”