

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

ABUNDANT FRUITFULNESS



SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalms 65:10-14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23

PRODUCING RICH, ABUNDANT FRUIT

Surprisingly, the word “fruit” or “fruitful” appears in all today’s scripture passages. For example, the well-known, lengthy Gospel about the four soils challenges everyone to bear abundant fruit whether it be a hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold. The readings also remind us that we frequently speak of “fruit” in our daily prayer, especially

in the rosary. Each time we pray the “Hail Mary,” we repeat: “blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” Indeed, Jesus is the most wonderful fruit that any human person ever bore!

Elizabeth’s Greeting. The proclamation of Jesus as the fruit of Mary’s womb by Elizabeth is found in the Visitation story (Luke 1:39-45). The scene presents Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit and impelled by love, rushing to the aid of her cousin Elizabeth who also is pregnant—even in her old age. In God’s loving plan, nothing is impossible. What a scene of great joy! Mary and Elizabeth, both faithful women of Israel, have been blessed by God’s love. When Mary enters Zechariah’s house, Elizabeth replies to Mary’s greeting and feels the child leap in her womb; she greets Mary enthusiastically: “Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Lk 1:42).

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Mary and Mission. Note the clear sense of mission in the Visitation scene. Mary, prompted by the Spirit undertakes a difficult journey into the hill country; she went in haste; she was on a mission of service. She could have rationalized staying at home; she was pregnant and the journey was long. It seems that every word of Elizabeth’s greeting has a special meaning: Yes, “blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Lk 1:45). Who is blessed? It is the one who, like Mary, *believes* in God’s promise and *acts* upon it; marvelous, abundant fruit is the result.

Mary’s Spirit-inspired Magnificat. The prayerful, poetic genius of Saint Luke is manifested in Mary’s hymn of praise known as the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55); it is an integral part of the Visitation narrative. Pope Saint Paul VI writes: “It was the Holy Spirit who filled her [Mary’s] soul with jubilant gratitude and moved her to sing the *Magnificat* to God her Savior.” When the Church celebrates Marian feasts, the liturgy notes that “it is our special joy to echo her song of thanksgiving [*Magnificat*]. What wonders you have worked throughout the world! All generations have shared the greatness of your love” (BVM Preface II). The fruitfulness of our Blessed Mother is overwhelming! Her *Magnificat* is a sublime example of the great transformations the Holy Spirit brings about. Mary is God’s fruitful soil through whom his plan for all peoples and generations is revealed.

Pope’s Message. Recently (5/31/26) Pope Leo XIV noted: “we turn to the Virgin Mary; like her ‘yes’ to the Divine will, may our ‘yes’ to the love of the Most Holy Trinity also bear fruit,” *the fruit of world peace and harmony*. Pope Leo continued: “May Divine Wisdom enlighten the consciences of those in authority and guide their decisions toward a sincere search for a just and lasting peace.” We wholeheartedly respond: Amen.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Isaiah 55:10-11: Today's Old Testament reading comes from the second part of Isaiah, written in the sixth century BC. This lovely passage asserts that just as precipitation from the heavens makes the earth fruitful, so also does God's Word that comes down from above. Our fruit-filled lives are to serve our neighbors and give glory to God.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 65:10-14: The psalm response expresses a wonderful truth: "the seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest." In divine wisdom, even nature manifests God's love and care for all creation. Continuously, God crowns everything with his bounty, making meadows, hills, fields, and valleys "overflow with a rich harvest."

Second Reading - Romans 8:18-23: Paul's letter to the Romans is filled with rich theology. Yes, there are many challenging aspects to living: human weakness, suffering, even sin and death. However, Paul forcefully asserts that all this is nothing when compared to our future promised glory. We live in hope, because we "have the Spirit as first fruits," assuring us of ultimate glory and redemption.

Gospel - Matthew 13:1-23: Jesus, a master-teacher, communicates profound truths through simple earthly stories, known as parables. Today's Gospel describes the four kinds of soil where the farmer's seed falls. We hear what happens when the seed falls on the footpath, upon rocky ground, among thorns, as well as on good ground. We sincerely strive with God's grace to be "good soil," that will bear abundant fruit.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► *Living in Joyful Hope*, ► *Exploring Vatican II Treasures*, and ► *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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