# Friday of the Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

**Gospel text (*Mk* 11:11-25):** Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple area. He looked around at everything and, since it was already late, went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany he was hungry. Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the time for figs. And he said to it in reply, “May no one ever eat of your fruit again!” And his disciples heard it.

They came to Jerusalem, and on entering the temple area he began to drive out those selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. He did not permit anyone to carry anything through the temple area. Then he taught them saying, “Is it not written:

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples? But you have made it a den of thieves.”

The chief priests and the scribes came to hear of it and were seeking a way to put him to death, yet they feared him because the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city.

Early in the morning, as they were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered to its roots. Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive

you your transgressions."

***"All that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it"***

Fr. Agustí BOADAS Llavat OFM
*(Barcelona, Spain)*

Today, fruit and prayer are key words in the Gospel. The Lord approaches a fig tree and finds no fruit there, only leaves, and he reacts by cursing it. According to Saint Isidore of Seville, "fig" and "fruit" share the same root. The next day, surprised, the Apostles say to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered" (Mark 11:21). In response, Jesus Christ speaks to them of faith and prayer: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

There are people who hardly ever pray, and when they do, it's with the hope that God will solve a problem so complicated that they can no longer see a solution to it. And they justify this with the words of Jesus we have just heard: "Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours" (Mark 11:24). They are right, and it is very human, understandable, and legitimate that, faced with problems that overwhelm us, we trust in God, in some power greater than ourselves.

But it must be added that all prayer is "useless" ("Your Father knows what you need before you ask him": Mt 6:8), insofar as it has no direct practical use, such as—for example—turning on a light. We receive nothing in return for praying, because everything we receive from God is grace upon grace.

So, is prayer unnecessary? On the contrary: now that we know it is nothing but grace, that is precisely when prayer is most valuable—because it is "useless" and "free." Even so, there are three benefits that prayer of petition gives us: inner peace (finding Jesus as our friend and trusting in God is relaxing); thinking through a problem, analyzing it, and knowing how to frame it is already half the battle; and third, it helps us distinguish between what is good and what we might simply want on a whim in our prayer intentions. So, in hindsight, we understand through the eyes of faith what Jesus says: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (Jn 14:13).

## *Thoughts on Today's Gospel*

- "'Let no fruit ever grow on you hereafter'. This Gospel passage makes us feel sorry, yet at the same time encourages us to strengthen our faith, to live by faith, so that we may always be ready to yield fruit to Our Lord." (Saint Josemaría)

- “Are we disposed to let ourselves be ceaselessly purified by the Lord, letting him expel from us and the Church all that is contrary to him? In the temple's purification, however, it was a matter of more than fighting abuses. A new time in history was foretold.” (Benedict XVI)

- “In his teaching, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray with a purified heart, with lively and persevering faith, with filial boldness. He calls them to vigilance and invites them to present their petitions to God in his name. Jesus Christ himself answers prayers addressed to him.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2621)