

OCTOBER 26 2024 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

There's a whole lot of stuff here, in these readings, and especially in the Gospel reading. It addresses, right at the beginning, why stuff happens to people—why bad things happen to people. And of course, it's a mystery. Now, of course, usually when something happens, people might say, "Yeah, because the person was smoking," or "He drove reckless," or whatever, and we can find the reason. But most of what happens, we don't have reasons. Why does someone have to get cancer? Why does someone crossing the road get killed by a car, or whatever? So it's a mystery, and Jesus addresses that. There are no worse sinners, or no worse off than other people. It just happens.

But in that, and then the next part, of course the thing about the fig tree... it really talks about God's infinite mercy, the infinite patience God has to wait for each one of us to flourish in our vocation. To flourish in our vocation. And in the first reading from Ephesians, Saint Paul talks about that too. We all have been given different gifts. God has given each one of us unique gifts, to be used for the kingdom. Just like Mary, as the Mother of God, received a certain gift, but that gift also changes over time. We often forget that our vocation, our calling from God, changes over time.

For instance, Mary, the Mother of God, her vocation changed several times in her life. First of all, as a child, her vocation was to learn, to be a good child, and to be obedient. She became a mother, the vocation of a mother, which is so important, which is the total giving of self for the next generation. Mary knew the vocation of being a widow, having to do it all by herself, with no support from her husband. And so many people

know about that too in our days. And, of course, as we know, by tradition, she spent her last 30 years or so of her life in Ephesus, praying. The vocation of praying. We often forget how that is a vocation, especially when we get older, and our bodies start to break down, and we cannot move around, we cannot run here and there, but we can pray for the Church, for world peace, for migrants, and for those who are suffering in our society—those who are, say, abused in marriages, and so on.

But our vocation changes as we go along our life journey. It's for us to discover that vocation. The vocation of a widow without children can be different than the vocation of a widow with grandchildren. Different vocation, but still a calling from God. And so we have to discover our own vocation as we go along life.

Today, actually, on the Universal Calendar, please forgive me if I don't pronounce the name right, but Blessed Jose Gregorio Hernandez Cisneros, who died in 1919, is a beautiful example of discovering a vocation. He was extremely intelligent, a Venezuelan who studied in Caracas, Paris, and Berlin. He was a very gifted medical doctor, but he had this great desire to enter religious life—to the Franciscans, or even to the Carthusians. But every time he tried—he started studying in Rome, actually, theology—every time he tried, he got sick. He just got sick. And twice he really tried to enter a religious order, but when he tried, he was so sick that he could not enter. And he said, "Oh, okay! So I understand where God wants me. So I have to be that medical doctor. I cannot be a gifted medical doctor and sit somewhere in a cloister and pray."

He was very well known as a medical doctor in Caracas, Venezuela, but he was very much looking after those who had so much less—the poor, and so on. And actually, eventually, in 1919, he was killed crossing the road with medication for a person who was very poor. But discovering our own vocation as we go along our life—that's the key.

Some of you know a little bit about my own life story, how that has evolved, my changing vocation. And my vocation will continue to change as I get older, and especially when I—actually, I start to look forward, as I speak about it—when my own health breaks down, and that I probably will be spending some time in a nursing home, waiting for God to bring me home. But I will pray for the world, to pray for all those who need so many prayers. And the world needs so many prayers.

Of course, as our vocation changes, we also need to learn, as we grow with God, to become patient—patient with other people, like God is. Not to have big expectations of people around us. To be there, and to just love them for where they are. And to be patient, so they can also grow in their own vocations.

Amen.