



The Garden and the Harvest

by Joan Steele, Mission Administrator & Director of Religious Education

Happy Autumn Season! When the days get decidedly shorter and the air temperature cools, our thoughts branch out to usher in a new season - the Season of the Harvest. For farmers and ranchers, and even those with small home gardens, this is a season of celebration. It is a time to reap the benefits of the previous two seasons of plowing, planting and tending crops. It is an anticipatory time involving hard work before the season of rest and recovery. In the church year, we are approaching the end of *Ordinary Time* and will soon be entering into the *Season of Advent*, a preparatory time prior to receiving anew the coming of the Lord, our Savior, being born into the deepest darkness of our world.

As we personally look to the *harvest*, what do we find ourselves storing in our *barns*, in our *lives*?

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Through our Baptism we became members of the Catholic Church, the *Body of Christ* on earth. We were anointed into Christ's body as priest, prophet, and king. We confirmed our own personal desire to deepen our commitment to our faith through our celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. We stated, of our own free will, that we had decided for ourselves to continue to follow Jesus. What difference has that decision made in our lives?

We learned, while preparing for Confirmation, that we have received the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit at our Baptism. We pledged through our Confirmation that we would welcome the Spirit into our lives in a more active way as we continued to open up and explore the gifts we'd been given.

Wisdom – considered the first and greatest of the gifts, wisdom acts from both our intellect and our will.

Understanding – this gift gives us a profound appreciation for God's will and providence in our lives. *Understanding* helps us to comprehend truth and our own personal purpose in God's plan for us.

Counsel – enables us to choose *promptly* and *rightly*. This gift of the Spirit helps us to choose prudently through a supernatural intuition, through the counsel of sacred scripture and the advice of godly people in our lives.

Courage/Fortitude – enables us to defend our faith and to exercise endurance in difficult circumstances.

Knowledge – allows us to view life through God's perspective. It empowers us to see through the eyes of our hearts.

Piety – the gift of *piety* provides us with a healthy *reverence* and *humility* in our lives enabling us to realize our dependency on God for everything good that we have, beginning with our very lives and breath. It helps us remember that *God is God*, and *we are not*.

Fear of the Lord – the gift of *Awe and Wonder* – gives us a profound and joyful awareness of the glory and majesty of God.

What is the work we do to till the soil, plant the seeds and tend the crops of our faith life? The Gifts of the Spirit, the Gifts of our Faith, were never meant to be gifts we held onto closely, but rather, gifts to be shared with others and given away. How are we doing with this work? St. Theresa of Calcutta often said, "*Love doesn't demand that we do great things, but rather, to do small things with great love.*" In what simple ways could we share God's love with someone else today?

How do we *grow our faith*? We read scripture, we pray, we receive the Sacraments, we attend Mass. As the *Body of Christ*, the Church meets to praise and thank God for our many blessings, to commemorate Jesus' sacrifice, to receive His Body and Blood in Holy Eucharist, given to nourish and strengthen us for our journey and our trials. We meet to enjoy fellowship with the rest of the *body* – our *faith community*. Sometimes (here's a shocker!) it is *NOT even about us* and what we're *getting out of church!* Sometimes our presence at Mass is to help someone else whose faith may be faltering, *someone who needs your presence* to comfort, strengthen and encourage them.

How would your body feel if your arm or your foot only decided to show up once in a while to participate with the functions of your body? Yes, we need to participate with the rest of the Body of Christ. In the past, when very frustrated with difficult people I have had to deal with, I have thought to myself, "*I'd be a better Christian if it didn't have to involve dealing with other people.*" Of course, when I calmed down, had a better control of my emotions, and reviewed that statement I knew that, in truth, it wouldn't be easier, it would be *impossible*. Living out our Christian faith *requires* interaction with others. Christianity does not flourish in a vacuum. It is in our interfacing with others,

offering a shoulder to cry on or sharing another's burdens, in essence becoming the hands and feet of Jesus, that we put into practice what we believe. In these instances, we best reflect the light of Christ to the world.

Living out the *Gifts of the Spirit* allows the *Fruits of the Spirit* to flourish within our lives. The harvest of these fruits includes **Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control**. In other words, we become more **Christ-like**. As Christians, that is *ever our goal!*

Agape Love – an undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill that always seeks the highest good for others, regardless of their behavior. It is *Love by Choice*.

Joy – When we love unconditionally, we can experience *joy*. *Joy* comes from God. It is deeper and more stable than emotional happiness. *Joy* comes from *knowing* deep within our being that we are *loved and cherished* by our Creator. He *delights* in us.

Peace – a quietness, a tranquility that comes from a deeply seated understanding that God is in control and has our best interests at heart - *God is Good, All the Time; All the Time, God is Good!* This peace comes even in the midst of chaos when we keep our eyes focused on Jesus.

Patience – Couldn't we all do well to exercise more patience in our relationships? Patience is a reference to God's attitude with humankind, *slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity*. *Patience* also includes constancy, perseverance, steadfastness . . . as opposed to cowardice or despondency.

Kindness – is when we behave as we should, regardless of how we are being treated by others. It is *goodness in action*, a true example of "*what would Jesus do*".

Goodness – the fruit of moral excellence, exhibits our strength of character by our quality conduct.

Faithfulness – this fruit is a gift from God that enables us to become and remain trustworthy, faithful and true.

Gentleness – also known as *meekness*, this fruit is a virtue that can only work through faith. A person with *gentle* spirit is even-tempered, tranquil and balanced. The person is unpretentious and exercises control over his/her passions. *Meekness* is not an indication of *weakness*, but rather is an indication of *power and strength under control*. A *gentle* person forgives others and themselves, corrects their own faults and rules their spirit well.

Self-control – describes the ability of mastering our own thoughts and actions. This is a fruit that one can continually ask the Holy Spirit to help us improve on as it enables us to interact with others in a more *Christ-like* fashion.

Whether we are simply in the fall season of the year, or perhaps the fall season of our lives, the bounty of our harvest comes only *after* we've put in the *work*, planting, growing, pruning, flowering and producing good fruit. We can't do it all by ourselves. We live in families, communities . . . in the *Body of Christ*. May we review our previous seasons and look for the evidence of our work combined with the overflowing grace from God. Let us enter into the Harvest Season as a celebration for the abundance of blessings in our lives.



Evidence

By Josh Baldwin

All throughout my history
Your faithfulness has walked beside me
The winter storms made way for spring

In every season, from where I'm standing

I see the evidence of Your goodness

All over my life, all over my life

I see Your promises in fulfillment

All over my life, all over my life

Help me remember when I'm weak

Fear may come but fear will leave

You lead my heart to victory

You are my strength and You always will be

I see the evidence of Your goodness

All over my life, all over my life

I see Your promises in fulfillment

All over my life, all over my life

See the cross, the empty grave

The evidence is endless

All my sin rolled away

Because of You, oh Jesus

See the cross, the empty grave

The evidence is endless

All my sin rolled away

Because of You, oh Jesus

I see the evidence of Your goodness

All over my life, all over my life

I see Your promises in fulfillment

All over my life, all over my life

I see the evidence of Your goodness

All over my life, all over my life

I see Your promises in fulfillment

All over my life, all over my life

Why should I fear

The evidence is here

Why should I fear

The evidence is here.

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Join the Labor Force

Georgia Cordle, Parishioner

“He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” Luke 10:2

Guess what? We are the laborers! He sends us.

Before the harvest can happen, the laborers must happen. The laborers must do the hard work of cultivating the land, of sowing the seeds, of pulling the weeds, of keeping the plentiful pests from invading and lots of watering must precede the harvest. That's the work that we laborers are being called to do.

We are called to use the gifts that God has sown in us and labor to bring forth the plentiful harvest that God desires.

It is difficult to be a laborer. The work is demanding and we can feel quite inadequate. There are so many 'bad seeds and pests' that keep attacking our resolve and weakening our strength. We are the 'few' that must labor against all the many obstacles this world of wealth and this world of poverty throw in our path.

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9

So how do we persevere? By joining together with other laborers who are called. By remembering the words and commands of the One who has called us. By working together to sow the seeds of a plentiful harvest. By using the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. Why? **“For we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.”**

Outreach Ministry

Mission San Antonio de Padua supports several outreach programs. We are looking for someone to help us grow this ministry. It won't take a lot of time; you do not need any training and you will be answering God's call to minister to your brothers and sisters.

Programs:

Communion Service for the Homebound: Please let us know if you need communion brought to you. Receiving the Eucharist is fundamental to our Catholic beliefs.

Prayer Circle: Are you willing to pray for those in need? Do you need special prayer? The prayer circle is a great way to reach out and reach up! You don't need to be able to travel; prayer requests can be shared within the group via the telephone or email. A scheduled prayer time of 8 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m. unites those offered prayers. Join in any time or all times to add your united voice of prayer for those in our parish family who are in need.

Meals during a family illness/hospitalization: Would you be able to provide a meal for someone who is in need? Are you in need of some help while you deal with health issues?

Carpooling services for Mass: If you need a ride to Mass or if you can provide a ride, this might be the ministry for you.

Want to help in other ways? We are always looking for volunteers to help in the Padre's Garden, Clean the church or work on our necessary fund raisers. Call the Mission for more ideas.

If you are interested in lending a hand or would like to be remembered in any of these ministries, please contact Joan at the office.

Mission San Antonio

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