

# Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

MARIA R. BASTONE

Posted Monday, October 3, 2011 2:19 pm

## **KELLY GALIMI**

This marks the debut of Family and Faith, a monthly series of articles inviting Catholic families to engage in thoughtful and constructive dialogue about how we are called to live like Christ in prayer, word and action each day.

Covering different faith or Scripture topics each month, Family and Faith seeks to be a catalyst for discussion and reflection to help families strengthen their understanding and love of our Catholic faith.

Jesus knew how to tell a good story. Having heard of the miracles and wisdom of Jesus, people of all walks of life were captivated by Jesus' every word. Think of the anticipation and gratitude filling the hearts of all those who listened to Jesus' parables. These short stories using familiar situations and symbols from the natural world are designed to illustrate a spiritual truth or moral lesson.

In the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, Jesus emphasized the importance of tending and nurturing the soul towards salvation.

“There was once a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, “For three years now, I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree, but have found none. Cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?” He said to him in reply, “Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the land around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.” (Luke 13:6-9)

In this parable, Jesus wants his followers to see the direct and necessary connection between repentance and salvation. If this parable could be studied as a one-act play with defined characters, we will see how Jesus wants to help us on our lifetime journey towards salvation and everlasting life with God. The characters in this parable are the orchard owner, the gardener and the fig tree. It may be helpful to give you a hint about one of

these roles: You are the fig tree. What role would God play in this parable? What role would Jesus play?

As the orchard owner, God watches over us (the fig trees) and wants to see the fruit (a life based on love, forgiveness, charity and reverence) that will lead us to everlasting life in Heaven. During the three years of Jesus' teaching about God's love and forgiveness, many people were still not repenting of their sins and bearing the "fruit" of having God as the center of their lives.

In the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, Jesus plays the role of the hopeful gardener who convinces the orchard owner (God) to give the fig tree another chance to be saved. As the gardener of human souls, Jesus will fertilize our faith through his teaching, suffering, death and resurrection. With Jesus' help, our repentant hearts will be the longed for fruit that the orchard owner (God) wants to see grow in faith.