

Blossoming from the Lord

by the Rev. Frederick Chapin

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

If we have a true love for the Lord in our hearts, it will show itself in our outward actions. The way we conduct ourselves before others will give evidence of our desire for the Lord to be active in our lives. One of the characteristics of Divine love is to use its power for the sake of others. And the person who chooses to receive the Lord's love will also have this same desire. Without the Lord, it is impossible for us to perform acts of charity toward others in sincerity. The Lord made this clear when He told His disciples:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5).

Therefore, we are absolutely dependent on the Lord to be in a state of genuine charity. Only when we are looking to the Lord can we truly love our friends, spouses, and even our children. When the Lord is received and His love is active in our hearts, our external actions will be effected. We will seek to say and do things of genuine use for others. If the Lord is received, our outward actions will be in charity; if the Lord is not received, our actions will only be for the sake of self. The Lord referred to this principle in His Sermon on the Mount: "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:17, 18, 20). We can only bear good fruit in our actions when we are willing to be led by the Lord. And when we are a good tree, this good fruit will be displayed before others.

Displaying good from the Lord before others is also described in the story of Aaron's rod budding with blossoms and almonds. Shortly before the Children of Israel were to enter the land of Canaan, they complained once again about the hardships of their journey, but this time they began to question the authority of Moses and Aaron. They were starting to wonder if Moses and Aaron had the right to lead them. In fact, the rebellion grew until finally a man name Korah openly revolted against Moses and tried to overthrow him. Eventually, Korah and his followers died when the earth opened up and swallowed them. However, to remove all doubt as to who He had chosen to lead the Children of Israel, the Lord instructed the leader of each tribe to write his name on a rod or branch and place it before the ark, which contained the Ten Commandments. Aaron, representing the tribe of Levi, placed a rod in the middle of the other rods. The next day, Aaron's rod—miraculously—was full of blossoms! By this powerful display, the people were convinced that Moses was their leader, Aaron was the chosen High Priest, and the tribe of Levi was to perform the duties of the priesthood. After this incident, Moses and Aaron's authority was never seriously questioned again.

Like Aaron's rod, our external lives can blossom from the Lord. Those around us will see the

Lord's love operating through the acts of kindness we perform toward them. Just as Aaron's rod manifested the Lord's power and providence, so too, our external acts of charity will manifest the Lord's divine love when we receive Him. The Lord taught this when He spoke to Nicodemus, "He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:21). Just as Aaron's rod showed the Lord's will to the Children of Israel, so our external actions will show the Lord's calling for our lives when we allow Him to direct our ways.

Not only did the blossoming of Aaron's rod show that he had the right to occupy the position of High Priest, it also showed that the tribe of Levi was chosen to perform the duties of the priesthood. They had the special task of performing the rituals of worship that were commanded by the Lord. Therefore, Levi had a very important responsibility—one that had a profound effect on all the other tribes. The tribe of Levi was given this responsibility because it represented love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor (see *Apocalypse Explained* 431:2). It represented the desire to receive the Lord's divine love into one's life.

When we have this desire, we will have an affection for truth (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 357), for truth teaches us how we can receive the Lord—that is, what we should focus on and enjoy so as to be in a receptive state for the Lord to enter in. A compassionate doctor will enjoy the study of medicine so that he can fulfill his desire to heal people. So, too, a spiritual person will delight in truths that teach him how to live the life the Lord wants him to live. And through the truths, we will come into a perception of what is good (see *Arcana Coelestia* 6998). We will understand how the teachings from the Word can be applied to our lives. This desire to perform good deeds and learn truth is represented by the tribe of Levi. For, through their priestly duties they insured that the Children of Israel could worship the Lord and through this worship know how the Lord wanted them to conduct their lives.

The desire or affection to receive the Lord and allow Him to direct our lives is essential. Without this desire, it is impossible to be a part of the Lord's kingdom. We simply would not want to be included, but would wish to live only for ourselves and to have everyone serve us. The desire to have the Lord lead and direct is the essential for the Lord to govern us. For this reason, Aaron's rod was placed in the center of the other rods, because the central position represents what is most important. Likewise, in all aspects of our lives, the dedication and willingness to serve the Lord must be the central motivation in what we say and do.

And when Aaron's rod was seen with blossoms, all the people knew, without doubt, that the Lord had chosen the tribe of Levi to serve as priests. Likewise, when our external actions conform to the truths of the Lord's Word, it will become manifest that the Lord has chosen us for a distinct purpose. As the Lord directs our lives, the need He would have us fulfill and the reason for our individual creation will become more evident. For each person is created to perform a use that no one else in all of creation can perform as effectively as he or she can. The Lord taught this when He said to His disciples, "You did not chose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

Externally, it may appear that one person has a greater impact than others do and so that he is more vital. However, the Lord cares for each person with His infinite love and wisdom. So it will

become apparent that the Lord has chosen each of us for a special use through the external benefits we are able to perform from His power.

When we perform acts that agree with the Lord's teachings in the Word, they will contain the infinite power of the Divine. The Lord will guide them and be in them. This power in uses is pictured by the rod of Aaron. It was through this rod that the Lord made His will known. And when it was made known, the message had such power that no one dared to question it. We can see the invincibility of Aaron's selection in the response of the people when they saw his rod with blossoms on it, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die. Shall we all utterly die?" (Numbers 17:12-13).

This was not the only time that Divine power was displayed through Aaron's rod. Earlier, while the Children of Israel were still in Egypt, Aaron's rod was made into a serpent which swallowed all the Egyptians' rods (which were also serpents). Therefore, through Aaron's rod, the Lord showed His will and the power that can never be defeated. We, too, will show an invincible power when we live the life the Lord desires for us. The uses we perform *from the Lord's love* will contain Divine power to provide comfort to the broken-hearted, direction to the confused, and support for the weak. The positive effect the Lord can have on others through us can never be defeated. Certainly affliction, discouragement, sicknesses, and even death will still affect our natural bodies. But our acts of charity from the Lord's love will have an everlasting effect, despite what may happen on the natural level of life.

Therefore, we are all to display a blossomed rod in the world around us. But this can only be done when we receive the Lord. We must choose to refuse the loves, thoughts, and acts that are against His Word. Then, as we obey His commandments, the fruit we bear will show the Lord's love toward the human race. The uses we perform will be the means whereby the Lord's name is glorified. For the Lord teaches "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Amen