

Our readings from Isaiah, Galatians and St Luke encourage us to be steadfast in our faith, to know that God loves us and not to be discouraged or reticent about telling others this Good News of the Kingdom.

A recurring message throughout the book of Isaiah is based on God's faithful love and how we can find hope in trusting His love. Time and time again in Isaiah God demonstrates His unending love for the people of Jerusalem, whose challenging journey was patiently learning how to faithfully trust in God's love. In Chapter 66: 10-14, God promises to comfort and bring peace to the people of Jerusalem like a mother caring for her child. Sometimes a child needs careful guidance, a quiet reassuring hug. Other times discipline and lessons need to be patiently learnt. In God lovingly nurturing His people this way, I think the people of Jerusalem are encouraged to keep turning their eyes and their lives to God, to keep putting their trust in His love. Then they will truly see, that is, they will have spiritual sight and spiritual values, not earthly ones.

If you do your best to develop spiritual richness with God, you will also get rewards for doing that hard work. If someone obeys the spirit of God, if you do something good in the loving eyes of the Lord, then you will be granted eternal life. In Galatians 6:7-11, St Paul speaks about how we must not grow weary in doing good work. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the urge to give up. It's too hard. I'm hopeless at this. I don't know how I'm going to get through this situation. But Father Robert's thoughts on Galatians 6 to me are revealing. If you're tempted to give up – don't! Don't be deceived by your feelings of discouragement. Don't be deceived by the difficulties in your life. Don't be deceived by the hardships in this world. Instead, take God seriously and keep on doing good because one day there will be a great harvest – a harvest of compassion and good works in this broken world, a harvest in a growing family of believers, a harvest of eternal life. If we do not give up.

Instead of focusing in on ourselves, on our own discouragements and failures, on whatever challenging situation we might face, we need to take the long view. It's not just about doing something good in the eyes of the Lord within yourself. It's also about a bigger scale than yourself. Our immediate concerns are just that - immediate concerns. But they are also part of a much larger context, a bigger picture that can give us hope beyond ourselves.

The rhythm of sowing and reaping was a familiar one in the ancient world. To gain a harvest required the hard work of sowing, the careful work of weeding, the patient work of waiting, and finally the joyfully tiring work of the harvest. Here, St Paul applies this familiar process to the spiritual realm: if you sow bad deeds, you will eventually reap corruption, if not in this life, then in the next; if you sow to the Spirit - though you may have suffering for a little while and though you may grow weary - you will reap eternal life.

These are words of encouragement from Galatians and fits into my interpretation of both Isaiah and Galatians through my 2020 school theme, which was taken from Matthew 6:19 and focuses on us devoting our Spiritual riches as treasures in Heaven rather than earthly riches. How significant this has been for all of us these past two years which has challenged us to reconsider our priorities – earthly through health, living without, caring for the planet and each other. But more importantly, spiritually, through quieting our lives to put our trust in the Lord's unending love for us all and learning to rely on Him more than this world.

Don't be deceived by your discouraging feelings! Don't be deceived by your apparently overwhelming situation! Do not grow weary in doing good - you are a new creation! Do not grow weary in dealing with whatever challenge you are facing - you are a new creation! Don't be discouraged or reticent in sharing your faith with others.