



It is by your fruits you shall be known

We live in an increasingly polarized society. Looking out for number one has become a national obsession here and in a number of other places in the world.

Many people have forgotten that no one can survive on their own. The fabric that has held people together in community – be it church, neighborhood, nation, or world, is being shredded by ideological obsessions and self-interest. That we are dependent on the people around us and cannot live without them is being denied. Many people are breaking trust with others and destroying decades of work at team building and cooperation between people and nations. The consequences are already and will continue to be devastating. The damage done will take major work and perhaps many decades to repair. The situation is being made far worse by those who intentionally seek to ‘reach the top’ at the expense of others. When people look for the worst in others, they will find it. When people adopt the worst practices, attitudes, and behaviors of the worst people in society, they will become as bad and often worse than the people they emulate. When personal attacks and attempts to destroy the credibility and personhood of those we disagree with becomes the way people respond to disagreements over ideas, it is more a reflection of the attacker’s weakness than of the person attacked, though it is all too often the person who is attacked who suffers from the attack, at least in the short run. Responding in kind, drags both parties down into the dirt. Pray for God’s help to stop this abusive treatment of others. Help us return to seeking what is good for all instead of only what is good for ‘us’. God calls us to bear good fruit and help others to do the same.

This week, start with your prayers:

- **The war with Boko Haram has devastated the population in rural northeast Nigeria**, one of the poorest regions on earth. More than two million people have fled their homes, tens of thousands have been killed and many more injured, abducted and conscripted to join the fight. The International Red Cross says nearly 22,000 Nigerians have been reported missing during the crisis which started in 2009. This includes 112 Chibok school girls still missing after 5 years. Boko Haram is now better armed than many government forces. They have successfully raided government bases to seize arms, and taken arms left behind when government forces abandoned their positions. Government forces have rounded up civilians into armed camps, sometimes by force, leaving the countryside in Boko Haram control (Boko Haram controls 4 of 10 zones in northern Borno State). Civilians in these camps are not always well treated. (Dionne Searcey, New York Times, 9-13-2019) Remember the Brethren in Nigeria who continue to live and minister under these conditions.
- **Be with the Kurds**. They are being forced from their homes and their land is being confiscated by people who have long wanted to annihilate them.
- **Be with those who are suffering because of decisions we have made** that make life harder for others.



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