

Homily
Optional Memorial of Saint Ephrem,
deacon and doctor of the Church
June 9, 2023

Who has ever felt unpleasant after a big meal when you just ate too much? What about after watching several hours of television knowing you had more important things that needed to be done? Or even being productive, but with those things you enjoyed doing, leaving those other, less enjoyable, things undone? We all have experienced those times when we let ourselves go and went to excess. None of these things are necessarily bad in themselves, but we know moderation is healthier. We know being productive brings its own joy.

Jesus told His disciples about the cause and effect of being good and producing good fruit. We are all made good by the God of the Universe in His loving creation. And we all have the choice to make good decisions and produce good fruit. Sometimes the fruit we produce is less than good; we are not perfect. And sometimes, most of the time, we produce good fruit.

Paul tells the Colossians to be good as they are made good by God. He is specific in how to be good, in loving one another and being kind to one another; producing good fruit, in words and in actions.

Today we celebrate St. Ephrem, a 4th century deacon and doctor of the church. He was a prolific writer of biblical commentaries, refuting common heresies of the day, and composer of hymns, credited with over three million lines of hymns, many lost in time, but many still used today. He is the patron of spiritual directors.

We can learn a lot from St. Ephrem in his life of good works. He lived an austere life of service and was a staunch defender of the faith. Our lives are comparatively more comfortable. It is easy, especially for me, to judge and sit back and have another slice of pizza or watch another episode, when I know I have a long 'to do' list and my time would be better spent being productive in service to the people of God.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying the comforts we are afforded in today's advanced society with technology waiting at our fingertips. For me, it is knowing when to get up off the couch and get back to work, knowing that true joy comes from serving others, being Christ for others, knowing that storing up treasure in heaven surely beats the earthly treasures of food and entertainment and comfort.

Please join me in striving for the perfection Jesus calls us to with good fruit because we are all made good. The choice is ours.