

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT UNLESS YOU REPENT YOU WILL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH

Today the lives of the Israelites are presented to us as an example and also a caution to us. Moses received his call to lead the Israelites from slavery. But he himself was a sinner because he had killed an Egyptian, and had ran away. He was asked to remove his sandals because he was standing on a holy ground. He was purified at that moment and he was sent.

When the Israelites were set free, they were not faithful to God, as St. Paul in the second reading is reminding the Corinthians, which is a reminder to us too. They grumbled about food and water, and they preferred being slaves in Egypt and eat onions and meat, to being set free; (cf. Ex. 16:1-3;17:1-4). They deserted God and worshipped the golden calf they made; (Ex.32:1-6). They complained about passing through foreign territories on their way to Canaan; (Nm.14:1-4). Even though, they were fed, given water to drink, and protected by God, under the leadership of Moses, they still complained, and many of them died.

St. Paul tells us that “these things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things as they did. These things have been written down as a warning to us”.

In the gospel, Jesus warned the people who thought that the Galileans killed by Herod, and the eighteen people killed by the falling tower at Siloam were sinners, that they were not better than them so they should repent otherwise they would also perish. The Jews attributed every disaster that befell anybody as a result of doing something evil. But Jesus told them to think about their own lives, how to do what is right.

This is also a warning to us. We are pilgrims on the earth. We are also followers of Christ who gives us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. He has redeemed us and wants to take us to His Father. But some of us are not ready to be faithful to Him. God is patient, and like the fig tree, we have been given time to repent.

Who is called to repent? I am to repent because I have sinned. I have to repent from my laziness, my pride, my selfishness and greed. I have to change from my anger and resentments. I am called to turn towards God who has called me to lead His people. Am I a faithful friend like Moses? Some of us do not know what to repent from because we never examine

our consciences. But how can I know my shortcomings if I have no time to look into my life to see what has gone wrong? You may not complain like the Israelites, but you may be arrogant, or rude, or selfish, or sexual pervert, or telling lies, or deceiving people, or not a faithful wife or husband, or stubborn child, or being lazy, or always quarrelling and shouting. I am told that the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) members admit that they have problems and so they need help.

The message of St. Paul should set us thinking, that “whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall”. Some of us play down the sins we commit. “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth has no place in us,” (1Jn.1:8), because, “all wrongdoing is sin,” (1Jn.5:17); but “if we acknowledge our sins He is trustworthy and upright, so that He will forgive our sins and will cleanse us from all evil,” (1Jn.1:9).