

3rd Sunday of Lent
March 20, 2022
“Repentance and Real Change”

Ex 3:1...15
1 Cor 10:1...12
Lk 13:1-9

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Every day, it seems, the news media relates all the tragedy that has befallen different people and nations of the world. Often, it is only the local news that says anything about the bright side of life. Nevertheless, most of what we read and hear leaves us untouched. It makes little or no impact on our lives.

But then something happens which brings us up short – because it does touch our lives deeply. Someone close to us suddenly dies. There is a terrible, life-changing accident experienced by someone close to us. We are truly shaken and moved to take inventory of our own life. We look at our assumptions, our relationships, our habits, our lifestyle – like never before. And, very often, we are moved to make changes. We decide to live life differently – to make important changes, to be a better person.

However, a year later, we discover – if we even think about it – that we are no different than what or who we were before! Maybe, we are even worse – because we wasted a grace that God had given to us!

In today’s Gospel of Luke, Jesus continues to urge us to repent – to change. Terrible and tragic things can happen to anyone. These things are part of an imperfect world. They are, certainly, not an indication that the victims are any worse than anyone else. But they remind us of just how fragile we are and how tenuous life is.

However, today’s tragedies, at home and abroad, should make an impact upon us and upon the way we live. They should impel us to reflect and make important changes for the better. We should truly renounce and repent of our sins. We should sever ourselves from all those people and activities that are evil, seductive, and dangerous for our souls. And we should – really, we must – begin to walk the path of a true disciple. This is the path alongside of Jesus – who was the Father’s greatest gift to a fallen and broken world!

The passage from the Book of Exodus shows us just how much of an impact that God's grace made upon Moses. God revealed something of Himself to Moses in the burning bush encounter. He gave Moses a special mission – and Moses was resistant. Yet, even when Moses questioned God and made excuses, God kept trying. And, somehow, despite all his faults and sins – Moses never really quit. He never said “No!” He stumbled and struggled again and again – but he never said “No!”

One of our problems is that we don't hear God's voice in the things that occur in our own lives. Or, if we do hear God's call, we never say “No!” directly. But we do resist God's grace – we procrastinate – We just let our busy lives distract us from what we should do differently.

One of the ways we can counter this resistance is to remember our solidarity with all of God's people – past, present, and future. Another way is to become a person of gratitude. Today, St. Paul teaches us that Jesus was present to the wandering Chosen People in the desert of Sinai. Jesus was present to them and to us as the Cosmic Christ who transcends all time and space. Moreover, we were present to the Chosen People because Jesus unites us to them and to everything he does – because he is the Lord of all things!

The sacrifice of Jesus extends backward and forward through all time for salvation and deliverance. The grace God gives us comes through Jesus – because Jesus – as Son – is co-eternal and one with the Father and the Holy Spirit!

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, we should be grateful and encouraged by the last words of Jesus in the Gospel selection. There is still time. There is still another chance. The gardener asked the landowner to give the fig tree one more year. He would give it special attention. If it still refused to respond – then it would, certainly, be destroyed.

Each Lent is a new opportunity for us to change. Each day is a new day to bring forward the best of our past. Each day is a chance to offer a better person to God in praise and gratitude. And we should never squander the grace that God gives us every day of our life!

I am reminded of a quote from Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings:

“Each day the first day – Each day a life. Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, to give back. It must be held out empty – for the past must only be reflected in its polish, its shape, its capacity.”

Let us pray that we can do this with our own lives and hearts.

Amen.

March 20, 2022

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