

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT
THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL

March 19/20, 2022

In Lent we experience the love and mercy of God in abundance. We are called to return to the Lord to experience His kindness and mercy. He loves the sinner but hates sin. This is what is echoed in today's responsorial Psalm: "Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is His kindness toward those who fear Him".

The mercy and kindness of God were shown to Moses and the Israelites when they were in Egypt. Moses was a murderer, but God called him and made him a different person. He was to humble himself before God by removing his sandals. It was also a sign of surrendering himself to God. The Lord heard the cry of the Israelites in their sufferings, and He came down to rescue them.

The Lord God is slow to anger and rich in kindness, and it is manifested in the life of Jesus. He forgave sinners their sins and welcomed them and ate with them; (MK.2:13-17, Levi; Lk.19:1-10, Zacchaeus; Jn.4, the woman at the well) among others. It is also expressed by Jesus in the parable of the fig we just heard about. The Lord is ready to wait for our change of life.

But the mercy and love of God are experienced by those who fear Him and ready to return to Him with their whole heart and mind. This is expressed both in the second reading and in the gospel. St. Paul reminded the Church in Corinth how Moses led the Israelites from slavery, how they were given food and drink in the desert (Ex.16:1-3;17:1-4), how God fought for them, but many of them died and did not reach Canaan because of their disobedience to the Lord.

He 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".

Jesus also warned the Jews not to think that those who were killed by Pilate, and those eighteen people who were killed by a falling wall were greater sinners. There is the need for everyone to repent. The Jews thought that when disaster befell on someone that meant the person was punished

because of the person's sins or as a result of doing something evil. And also, prosperity meant for them, good life and blessing. Jesus told them that a change of heart is very important to be saved.

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 the promised land, 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. When am I to repent? Today. I have to repent from my laziness, my pride, my selfishness and greed. I have to be a better priest and leader of God's people; to be who He wants me to be.

Some of us do not know what to repent from because we never examine our consciences. How can I know my shortcomings if I have no time to look into my life to see what has gone wrong? I may not complain like the Israelites, but I am guilty of all or some of the seven capital sins – pride, anger, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth, and greed. You may think that you are upright because you have not committed any serious sin, but St. Paul says: "whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall". St. John also warns us: "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 a 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). God is merciful and kind but He does not condone evil. He wants a better way of life from me.