

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Mt 4: 17
Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!
Repent, says the Lord;
the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL Lk 13: 1-9
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.
Unless you repent you will all perish as they did.
Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, ‘Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.’

He told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, “Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?” “Sir,” the man replied “leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.” ’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open
the Word

THE SAVING WORD

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT / C

23 MARCH 2025

A CHANGE OF HEART
Last week our Lenten focus was on prayer. This Sunday is about conversion and a change of heart. In the first part of today’s reading, Jesus reminds his audience that suffering or persecution is not the result of guilt or sin. Terrible events remind us to have a spirit of repentance. “Repentance” is more of an openness of heart and mind to God, the essential and primary quality of a disciple, and less the codified legalistic need to address one’s infringement of ethical or moral standards.
The second part of today’s Gospel moves in an ecological direction. Repentance implies ecological conversion. The parable of the fig tree and its owner highlights the attitude of its owner to what is grown on his property. He sees the tree as unproductive and therefore unable to provide a cash return. The owner is greedy. Earth’s gift, the tree, is seen as a commodity whose lack of fruitfulness means for the landowner that it is to be “cut down” because it is “taking up the ground” (literally in the Greek, “using up Earth”).
What appears as ecological sensitivity is rather an economic or materialistic agenda. But the one who cares for the Earth and the tree, its gardener, offers a more viable and environmental friendlier solution. Leave the tree, offer it fertiliser, and it may bear fruit in the future. He pleads for patience for Earth’s fruitfulness. This is instructive for contemporary disciples: tender horticultural practice that cares for Earth is preferred to pragmatic, utilitarian destruction.



Fr Michael Trainor

FIRST READING Ex 3: 1-8, 13-15
A reading from the book of Exodus
This is what you must say to the children of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.
Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. ‘I must go and look at this strange sight,’ Moses said ‘and see why the bush is not burnt.’ Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush. ‘Moses, Moses!’ he said. ‘Here I am’ he answered. ‘Come no nearer’ he said. ‘Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,’ he said ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.

And the Lord said, ‘I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.’
Then Moses said to God, ‘I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I Am who I Am. This’ he added ‘is what you must say to the sons of Israel: “The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.’

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM Ps 102: 1-4, 6-8, 11. R. v. 8
R. The Lord is kind and merciful.
1. My soul, give thanks to the Lord, / all my being, bless his holy name. / My soul, give thanks to the Lord / and never forget all his blessings. **R.**
2. It is he who forgives all your guilt, / who heals every one of your ills, / who redeems your life from the grave, / who crowns you with love and compassion. **R.**
3. The Lord does deeds of justice, / gives judgement for all who are oppressed. / He made known his ways to Moses / and his deeds to Israel’s sons. **R.**
4. The Lord is compassion and love, / slow to anger and rich in mercy. / For as the heavens are high above the earth / so strong is his love for those who fear him. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Cor 10: 1-6, 10-12
A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians
All this that happened to the people of Moses in the desert was written for our benefit.
I want to remind you, brothers, how our fathers were all guided by a cloud above them and how they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in this cloud and in this sea; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, most of them failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert.

These things all happened as warnings for us, not to have the wicked lusts for forbidden things that they had. You must never complain: some of them did, and they were killed by the Destroyer.
All this happened to them as a warning and it was written down to be a lesson for us who are living at the end of the age. The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall.
■ The word of the Lord.