

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



Mercy

Merciful God,
even when we are slow to repent,
you show us kindness and mercy.
When our hearts are blinded by sin
we turn away from you and slowly wither
like the fig tree.
O God of compassion, renew our hearts
so that, like Moses, we might hear
your nourishing
and life-giving words and turn from sin;
may we bear abundant fruit and be signs
of your mercy
to those who live in darkness.
Give us the grace to turn from our
worldly desires
and seek the repentance you graciously offer
so that, standing on holy ground,
we may see your magnificence
and give you glory for ever and ever.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 28, 2016

Repent



Today's Readings: Exodus 3:1–8a, 13–15; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 6–7, 8, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:1–6, 10–12; Luke 13:1–9. Jesus' words in today's Gospel hopefully disturb you and challenge you to ask, "What must I die to in order to bear fruit?" This death is a sacrifice for others. You lay aside your ambitions for the good of the community. You name the sin that entraps you and keeps you from God. Such dying leads to the life promised by Christ because it aligns us to his Paschal Mystery. Jesus does not blunt his words in the Gospel. He is very clear that if you do not repent you will die. Sit with that for a moment. What thoughts or feelings are present? Jesus' words seem rather harsh, but like Moses who led the Israelites out of slavery, Jesus frees us from our slavery

and gives us life. For what do you need to repent? What is consuming you and keeping you from serving others?

Both the psalm and the parable about the fig tree remind us that God is kind and merciful. God does not give up on us or abandon us, but waits patiently for us to bear fruit. What is necessary for one to bear fruit? Repentance! During this season, we have the opportunity to examine and excise what is choking us and causing us to be barren. Through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving (and other works of mercy), we begin to nourish the soul and open ourselves to God's mercy. With friends or family, consider taking time this week to meditate on passages from these readings and discuss how repentance leads to new life.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 29, 2016

Hearing

Both Elisha and Elijah end up serving non-Israelites because they weren't accepted by their own people. The end of the Gospel indicates that the people became furious with Jesus. Like Elisha and Elijah, Jesus is rejected in his own land. We learn in this passage that Jesus was sent to save all people and those who hear the Word of God will be drawn in and healed. By spending time in silence today, you may become attentive to the call of the Holy Spirit. *Today's Readings: 2 Kings 5:1–5ab; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Luke 4:24–30.*

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

Mercy

In today's Gospel, Jesus paints a picture of mercy as he seeks to teach his disciples about forgiveness. It's not always easy to forgive a neighbor, but as Christians, we must strive to follow Jesus' example. Like the psalmist, many of us plead that God will remember the times he bestowed mercy. Do you remember to be merciful? How can Lent be a turning point for you? Whom do you need to forgive? Pray for a contrite heart. *Today's Readings: Daniel 3:25, 34–43; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 18:21–35.*

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Law/Love

Both readings today speak about the Law. Many people shy away from this word. Let's consider it another way. Jesus says he fulfills the Law. His very presence reveals the Kingdom and his ministry is about preaching the justice and peace of God. To follow him means to suffer and to love one's neighbor. If we are genuine in this mission and seek forgiveness when we fail at loving, Jesus says we will be "great in the kingdom of heaven." Spend a few moments examining your conscience. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Psalm 147:12–13, 15–16, 19–20; Matthew 5:17–19.*

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Optional Memorial of St. Katharine Drexel, Virgin

Why is it so hard to listen? What makes it so difficult to follow God's will? God is madly in love with us and desires for us to be in relationship. If we listen to God's voice with open hearts, we will be changed and God will fill us with love. This love will overflow so that we can share it. Katharine Drexel's heart was so open to God's love that when she saw oppression, she sought to alleviate suffering. She established schools for Native Americans and African Americans. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 7:23–28; Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9; Luke 11:14–23.*

Friday, March 4, 2016

Love

The Gospel gives us a powerful message today. Jesus combines two great commandments that Moses gave to Israel. The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) calls us to love God with our entire being. Leviticus 19:18 reminds us to also love our neighbor. The scribe, who had witnessed all the distress around Jesus, realizes that love, not sacrifices, is what God desires. Because he realizes this, Jesus tells him he's not far from the Kingdom. How do you understand love as your mission? Consider writing down the Shema and using it in prayer. *Today's Readings: Hosea 14:2–10; Psalm 81:6c–8a, 8bc–9, 10–11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28–34.*

Saturday, March 5, 2016

Return

The prophet Hosea is pleading for Israel to return to the love of the Lord. If they do so, God will heal and revive them. Hosea reminds us that God desires steadfast love. In the Gospel, we see this vulnerable love in the tax collector who honestly approaches God to seek mercy. God will have mercy on those who love him. *Today's Readings: Hosea 6:1–6; Psalm 51:3–4, 18–19, 20–21ab; Luke 18:9–14.*

