

March 24, 2019

Third Sunday of Lent

Ex. 3:1-8A, 13-15, 1 Cor. 10:1-6, 10-12, Lk. 13:1-9

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The readings for Sunday March 24, 2019, the Third Sunday of Lent give a distinct call to action, specifically to repentance. The voices in these readings are some of the most powerful in our tradition: Moses, Paul, and Jesus Himself. It is a personal reminder to us that teaches considerations of preparedness, procrastination, attentiveness, and human weakness.



In the Exodus reading, God presents Moses with a sign. Moses is busy with his daily work when he sees a burning bush. An Angel of the Lord speaks to him from the bush.

How often have we been presented with signs and signals in our lives? Moses checks out the beacon and finds himself in a direct encounter with God. He gives Moses a mission. It is time for him to rescue his people. Moses is hesitant and asks God who will he say sent him? In contemporary parlance, he is anticipating a reaction of “who made you boss?” God says “I AM sent me to you”. Moses musters up his courage and follows God’s will.

The reading challenges us to recognize the burning bushes in our lives; have the courage to approach them and respond to their call. The voice of I AM summons us to action but we stumble; we hesitate or ignore. Moses got the message.

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians takes up the theme of repentance. He refers to Moses and speaks of the ancestors who followed him “through the sea” and ate and drank the food and drink I AM provided. But the Hebrews faltered in their faith. Paul tells Corinthians not to fall back but to remain true to their “new self” that he spoke of to the Colossians (3:10,12-13). In short, repent.

The verse before the Gospel echoes the theme of repentance, “Repent says the Lord: the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This call seems like a constant challenge. Do we have signs and burning bushes in our lives to stay on mission? What happens when we veer away? The Responsorial Psalm comforts us by reminding us “The Lord is kind and merciful.” We need to repent and move forward again.

The parable of the fig tree in the Gospel amplifies the message. The owner wants to cut the tree down because it has not borne fruit. But the gardener tells him to wait another year and he will cultivate and fertilize it. Like the tree, our faith needs nourishment in order to live each day in Christ. Equally important is the practice of repentance and the realization that Jesus is there with forgiveness and abundant mercy for those who believe in Him.

Father Quentin Hackenworth takes up a lot of these themes in “Growing the Virtues of Jesus”. This distillation of the founder’s thoughts is a bedrock of Marianist insight and spirituality. At

the conclusion of the work, Father offers some salient points: “Living the virtues of Jesus is always a collaboration between the work of grace and your own efforts.” The Hebrews, the Corinthians, and the Galileans all turned away from their true path. They forgot that the Lord is “kind and merciful”. Father Chaminade reminds us that we are all missionaries when we do the work of Jesus in the world. Repentance keeps us on track in our journey.