

## Homily Notes for Sunday, March 20, 2022

Readings: Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15; I Cor 10:1-6, 10-12; Lk 13:1-9

Am I using my time well to prepare myself for heaven?

**1. Today's readings capture the essence of God's Lenten message to us, His people.**

He offers words of compassion and mercy as well as warning. He warns us, especially, of the need to repent and make the most of the gift of time He has given us to be ready.

**2. All three of today's readings speak of God's mercy and compassion in disciplining His children by occasional punishment while giving them another chance despite their repeated sins.** Although God's love for us is constant and consistent, He will not save us without our co-operation. That is why He invites us during Lent to repent of our sins and to renew our lives by producing fruits of love, compassion, forgiveness, and faithful service.

**3. The First Reading, from Exodus, recounts Moses' first encounter with the living God** who provides reassurance of His nearness to the people in their suffering. In this encounter with Moses, God tells of His desire to deliver his people from slavery into freedom and fullness of life. He tells Moses, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them... and lead them... into a land flowing with milk and honey." This compassionate God goes even farther, revealing His name to the people as a sign of intimacy with them and telling them, "This is my name forever; thus am I to be remembered through all generations."

**4. In regard to our stewardship of time, let us notice that Moses took the time to check out something that seemed strange, that there was a bush burning but not consumed.** Is there not a danger that we can be so busy about our things that we don't take time to check out what might be a sign or guidance from God? Then he had to decide to leave his place of peace and security and return to Egypt where his life would be threatened.

**5. Our Second Reading, from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, reminds us that God, though full of mercy and compassion, is also just, and that there will be consequences for our behavior.** He admonishes us, "whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall." This means we need to examine our consciences regularly, be sure we are not dominated by egotism and pride, and check ourselves out.

**6. Today's Gospel passage includes the familiar parable of the unfruitful fig tree.** It is preceded by a dialogue between Jesus and some people reporting the news of the day, asking for His "take" on the matter. They tell Jesus about a bloody massacre that some Galileans had suffered at the hands of Pilate. They expected Him to confirm their view

that the Galileans had done something to deserve such a death. But Jesus defies their expectation, telling them that the people who died such an awful death were no more sinful than they themselves are. He goes on to say the same of another recent event in which a group of people had been killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them. They, too, Jesus says, were no more sinful than anyone else. They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time when tragedy struck.

**7. The point He is making is that life is precious and the gift of time on this earth is just that — a gift.** None of us knows how much time will be granted to us, so we must use this gift intentionally to glorify God and serve our neighbor. None of us knows when we might have a head-on car crash. We don't know when we might come down with deadly cancer. We must be continually ready for our death!

**8. Jesus offers the parable of the fig tree to further illustrate this truth.** The owner of the orchard came searching for fruit on a fig tree he had planted in his orchard. Finding no fruit on the tree after three years, he told the gardener to cut it down. But the gardener intercedes and asks for one more year to cultivate and fertilize the tree in hopes it would bear fruit in the future. The fig tree was not dying; it simply wasn't doing much of anything at all. Can this be said of us and our lives as well?

**9. The season of Lent is a time to reflect carefully on the way we spend our time.** Do we give first priority to God, tending to our spiritual growth and sacramental life with diligence? Do we give next priority to our loved ones, focusing intentionally on them each day without distractions from phones, screens, or thoughts of work? If not, now is the moment to repent of our waste of time or of misplaced priorities on our use of time. God is merciful but just. Let's turn to Him and ask Him to make our lives fruitful while we still have time to do so.

**10. A suggestion from the business world on priorities:** This suggestion was worth \$25,000 to the CEO of General Electric in the 1950s. The consultant said, "Make a list of what you have to do. Prioritize it and do the most important item first, the next, second, and continue." Do we take time to set important priorities from God's point of view, or do we just plunge ahead? Some actions may seem very pressing but have little final importance. Others are not so pressing but have very great importance. Prioritize and make your action list and get started! Are we ready to produce the fruit that the Lord wants or are we just preoccupied about ourselves? See also Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

**11. The two questions:**

- a. What is the one thing that will help me become the-better-version-of-myself this week?
- b. What is the one decision I should offer up to God at the offering?