

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for the 3rd Week in Lent ~

On my knees
before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses,
I offer myself —
soul and body to You,
Eternal Spirit of God.
I adore the brightness of Your purity,
the unerring keenness of Your justice
and the might of your love.
You are the Strength and Light of my soul.
In You I live, and move, and am.
I desire never to grieve You
by unfaithfulness to grace,
and I pray with all my heart
to be kept from the smallest sin against You.
Mercifully guard my every thought
and grant that I may always watch for Your light
and listen to Your voice
and follow Your gracious inspiration.
I cling to You
and give myself to you
and ask You by Your compassion
to watch over me in my weakness.
Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus
and looking at His Five Wounds
and trusting in His Precious Blood
and adoring His opened Side
and stricken Heart,
I implore You, Adorable Spirit,
Helper of my infirmity,
so to keep me in Your grace
that I may never sin against You.
Give me grace,
O Holy spirit,
Spirit of the Father
and the Son
to say to You always
and everywhere:
"Speak Lord,
for Your servant listens."
Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE:

Father John has been made aware of the arraignment a few days ago of former Chapel Music Director, Andres Andino, Sr. Mr. Andino was arraigned on charges of sexual misconduct and related offenses with a minor. These present charges do not involve any current or former student from Gilmour Academy or the Chapel. Mr. Andino was the Director of Music at Our Lady Chapel from March 16, 2018 - July 31, 2023.

While we do not believe this situation has any direct impact upon us, it is important to restate that the safety and well-being of everyone here at the chapel is our top priority. Gilmour Academy and Our Lady Chapel remain committed to maintaining a secure and supportive environment for all members of our community. Very strict protocols are in effect on our campus to ensure the safety of all. These include background checks, training, and reporting protocols in accordance with state laws and best practices, including strict adherence to the Diocesan Virtus program.

For your reference, if you ever suspect Child Abuse, The Diocesan Virtus Program demands that you immediately notify your county Child and Family Services [Cuyahoga County: 216-696-5437; Geauga County: 440-285-9141; Lake County: 440-350-4000].

It is important to state here that Andres Andino, Jr. — our current Director of Music — is not in any way associated with this accusation. We are delighted that he is with us.

THE CHOSEN:

As part of our Lenten Journey, we are going to view an episode of *The Chosen*, and follow it up with a discussion. This will take place on **Sunday, April 13 [Palm Sunday] from 11:30 AM until 1 PM. A Pizza lunch will be provided.**

The Chosen is an American Christian historical drama television series. Created, directed, and co-written by filmmaker Dallas Jenkins, it is the first multi-season series about the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Primarily set in Judaea and Galilee in the 1st century, the series depicts the life of Jesus through the eyes of the people who interacted with him, including the apostles and disciples of Jesus, Jewish religious leaders, Roman government and military officials, and ordinary people.

In contrast with typical Bible-focused productions, Jenkins has given more depth to his scripts by adding backstories to various characters from the gospels without contradicting the material of the gospel.

Although the show has an evangelical tendency, there are consultants from three Christian faith traditions providing input. Acting as consultants are Messianic rabbi Jason Sobel from Fusion Global Ministries; Catholic priest and national director of Family Theater Productions Father David Guffey [a Holy Cross Priest]; and professor of New Testament at Biola University Dr. Doug Huffman. They review scripts and provide facts or context on the biblical, cultural, and socio-political history of the storyline.

It is hoped that this presentation will lead other such presentations in the future. If you have any questions, please contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560].

PENANCE SERVICE:

Our community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be held on **Monday, April 14th at 7:00 PM.** Our service is centered around reflections by the various characters involved in the passion and death of Jesus. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to bring ourselves from our sinful ways back to the Lord. As we confront our own sinfulness, we realize that we, too, have a part to play in the death of Jesus. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be a time for individual confessions following the service, for those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. Please join us.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nick Chiacchiarri, father of Mark Chiacchiarri ['94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarri ['96], and grandfather of Aurelia ['28], and Olivia ['30] Chiacchiarri, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Thomas Noble who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Denise George, who is in rehab following a stroke.
- For Rick Shelby, who is recovering from open heart surgery
- For Brother Dan Kane, C.S.C., former long-time instructor at Gilmour, who is under hospice care.
- For Mary Vereb, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Finley Stay, father of Allen Stay ['87], who is undergoing treatment for Covid Pneumonia.
- For Eileen Issing, mother of Father Dan Issing, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Danielle Adam, who is recovering from surgery, and undergoing further testing.
- For Toddy McMonagle who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- For Chris Keller, former trustee, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Holly Burke, mother of Hannah ['10] and Nathaniel ['10] Burke, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Tara Hyland Zittel ['07] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jeff Overman, brother of Upper school teacher, John Overman, uncle of Jack ['25], and former Gilmour student, Michael Overman., who is critically ill.
- For Hailey Grasso, who is preparing for serious surgery
- For Sister Rosemary Hammer, H.M., former religion teacher, who is recovering from surgery.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Rita Kirk, grandmother of Nicholas ['05], Janice ['08], Lauren ['08], and Monica ['13] Flocken
- For Alice Branon, aunt of Brother Dennis Bednarz, C.S.C.
- For Peter Poolos, father of Mark Poolos ['91]
- For Antoinetta Soreo, grandmother of Jamie Bergsman-Unger ['09], and grandmother-in-law of Jared Unger ['09]

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For all who are suffering from the various viruses which are going around.
- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas, and Russia and Ukraine.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For an end to violence in our society in all of its forms.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

BEING A PERSON OF FAITH:

Carroll Stuhlmueller had an interesting twist on Moses and the burning bush scene in Exodus [3:1-15]. Most of us presume that the Lord had stationed an angel along the path on which Moses was leading his flock, commissioned to give the “high sign” when the great liberator approached. At the proper moment, this special messenger would text one of his cohorts: “Cue the bush!” And the famous bush burst into flame.

Carroll was convinced that the bush didn’t have an off/on switch — it was always burning. Moses was simply the first person to notice the flames. The late, beloved expert of the Hebrew Scriptures presumed — with millions of such bushes in the Sinai — that people stopped looking at them, missing something which made one bush different from all others. Their similarity led people to think that they were all the same.

A person of faith lives in the same world in which all of us live, experiences the same people and situations we experience, but is able to surface something in those experiences which most of us never notice. For the authors of Scripture, faith isn’t an act of adhering to specific doctrines or dogmas — it is a unique frame of mind with which we approach everyone and everything around us.

Paul’s letter to the Church at Corinth zeros in on what it means to be a person of faith [1 Corinthians 10:1-12] — “I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea”. In other words, all the Israelites who took part in the Exodus experienced the same phenomena, “yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert.” For the Apostle, the important thing isn’t that you’re “there” but what you notice while you’re “there.”

“These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us. Those who think they are standing secure should take care not to fall.” If we’re waiting to make our move until God enters our life in a dramatic, decisive way, we’re going to be waiting a long time. God has always been in our lives — but only people of faith have noticed God’s presence.

Jesus seems to address the same topic in Luke’s gospel [13:1-9]. In some sense Jesus is saying there’s no rhyme or reason why bad things happen. It’s not because we’re morally better than the victims. That’s simply the way the “ball bounces.” According to Luke’s Jesus, in the midst of such events, instead of placing blame, we should be looking at our own determination to “repent” — to look at people and events as God looks at them — not an easy frame of mind to acquire.

Yet, we follow a patient God — someone who hangs in with us long after others have given up. Instead of immediately cutting us down when we bear no fruit, our God continues to cultivate and fertilize the ground around us, always hoping that we will bear fruit in the future.

Instead of worrying about flunking catechism exams, we should be more concerned about flunking a vision exam. It’s clear from the scripture readings for this 3rd Week in Lent that God is more concerned with what we see than in what we know.

Hopefully Carroll Stuhlmueller now knows whether his burning bush hypothesis is correct or not. Yet it really doesn’t matter. The thousands whom he taught through the years always have benefited more from his biblical vision than from his historical knowledge.

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

REMEMBER:

Pilgrims are men and women of prayer, constantly in conversation with God about what is happening around them and within them.

—Anonymous



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, April 16th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word.

Our topic: The Theology of Holy Week in Scripture

Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. We usually will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting. Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, March 23: 3 rd Week in Lent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, March 24:	NO MASS
Tuesday, March 25: Annunciation of Jesus	NO MASS
Wednesday, March 26:	NO MASS
Thursday, March 27:	NO MASS
Friday, March 28:	NO MASS
Saturday, March 29: 4 th Week in Lent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, March 30: 4 th Week in Lent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

SCHEDULE OF HOLY WEEK/EASTER SERVICES:

- Palm Sunday — April 12th-13th — Mass at 5:00 PM Saturday and 10:00 AM Sunday.
- Communal Penance Service — Monday, April 14th at 7:00 PM
- Virtual Bible Study on the Theology of Holy Week in Scripture on Wednesday, April 15th at 6:30 PM.
- Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, April 17th at 7:00 PM.
- Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, April 18th at 1:00 PM.
- Proclamation of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross and Communion Service on Good Friday, April 18th at 3:00 PM.
- Easter Vigil Service will be at 8:45 PM on Saturday, April 19th.
- Easter Sunday Mass will be at 10:00 AM on Sunday, April 20th.



REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME: REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

Isn't it interesting how events and encounters can change our lives? For example, Moses' life and vocation — not to mention salvation history — were changed forever because: he was aware of what was happening around him. Moses took the time to investigate; he was open to God; and he was willing to engage and listen, and the rest is history [Exodus 3:1-15].

Sure, a burning bush that doesn't consume itself is a curiosity, but still, a burning bush is not utterly unique, and if he had been wrapped up in his own problems or thoughts, or in a hurry, he could have easily passed by, assuming the bush would soon burn up or that someone else would be along to tend to it.

How often do we pass by someone or something that could transform us, if we were open to them or it? Would God necessarily speak to us directly and give us a message as important as the message God gave Moses? Maybe not, but maybe. God does have desires and plans for each of us, just as God had desires and plans for Moses.

Think for a moment of events from your own life — how you met your husband or wife, how you ended up living where you currently live, the job you have — and it is endless. Each of us can think back to special people and happenings in our lives that have changed us forever and brought great blessings into our lives. Each of us have many special encounters, if we are open and responsive to the Lord.

And then there's the name. In the Jewish scriptures, we read of the names for people, and the why or history of their names. Jacob's name was changed to Israel because he wrestled with God [Genesis 35:10]. Simon's name was changed to Peter in the Gospel because he was to be the Rock [Matthew 16:18].

What's in a name? Jesus' name is a form of Joshua whose name would mean "He Who Saves His People". You, with your name, live his name as well. As we listen to the Word of God, remember that God is saving his people; He knows our names, and the histories of those names as well.

But let's go back to the burning bush. The burning bush is an account of God's first of many conversations with Moses. God speaks to Moses from a burning bush which does not consume the bush. Many experts have commented on the symbolism of that. Moses is asked to take off his shoes as he approaches the holiness of God. The Voice tells Moses that God has a good idea — Israel is in slavery over in Egypt and Moses is to go and manage their release.



The Voice identifies Itself as the God of Moses' religious tradition. God is the same God who called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So God reminds Moses of this, and then presents Moses with his mission — he is to go and talk to the powerful leader of Egypt. Moses responds stating a rather ironical: "Who am I to do such a thing?" So he asks God about what credentials can he present for this conversation with Pharos.

God says that Moses should say that "I Am Who Am" sent you. So we have the naming of partners. "I Who Am I" is being missioned by "I am Who". Moses has a second mission as well, and that is to inform the people of Israel that the God of their tradition has released them from slavery and desires that this be a cause for their remembering the "Who Am" who will always be with them.

In Luke's Gospel [13:1-9], two historic events — at least historic to the readers of Luke's Gospel —

captives" [see Luke 4]. God's saving action doesn't fly down from the clouds, it comes through people the Spirit moves and empowers to act in the name of the God of life, the God who is love.

What do these Scripture readings offer us as we reach the halfway stage of our Lenten journey? First, they warn us against judging others, reminding us that nobody deserves the life God gives us and that God is never the source of suffering. They tell us that God is not far, precisely because we who see suffering are commissioned to act like Moses and to know, like Jesus, that the Spirit of God empowers us to act in God's name. If we believe that, we're preaching the Gospel by living in metanoia.

—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appears on the internet

THE LIMITLESS GIFT — A HOLY CROSS PERSPECTIVE:

Luke's gospel reading ends with Jesus telling us a parable of mercy [Luke 13:1-9]. A fig tree that has not produced fruits in three years is given a reprieve after the intervention of the gardener. It will not be cut down. And yet, that reprieve lasts only for one year. After that year, if it still fails to produce fruit, the prospect is that it will be cut down. The orchard owner is clearly showing mercy, but it is not the truly abundant mercy that we read of in the Book of Lamentations: "The Lord's acts of mercy are not exhausted, his compassion is not spent; They are renewed each morning—great is your faithfulness" [Lamentations 3:22-23].

How are we to reconcile this parable of Jesus with that passage from Lamentations — or with many other passages in Scripture, including the gospels themselves, which speak of a much more abundant, even an endless, mercy? Perhaps if we were to get too hung up on that question we would risk becoming like the Sadducees who inquire of Jesus whose wife a woman would be in heaven after having had seven husbands on earth [see Matthew 22:23-33].

Jesus' parable invites us — even challenges us — to accept with real urgency God's mercy in a way that bears fruit in our lives now. We are not to let anything — even the promises of an endless mercy — lull us into a complacency of putting off our conversion and new life until tomorrow. We are not to wait any longer — in part, because we do not know what the future will bring, but even more so because of the fruits we could be enjoying today.

As Disciples of Jesus, there is another invitation — or challenge — to us in Jesus' parable. The real urgency of accepting God's offer of mercy raises the question for us, who are entrusted with the "ministry of reconciliation" [see 2 Corinthians 5:17-21], of how urgently, how zealously we are seeking to proclaim and share God's mercy and summons to conversion with others. Or could it be that we have grown lukewarm, complacent in our ministry [see Revelation 3:16], accepting from ourselves far less than what we truly have to give, far less than what we truly have been given [Luke 12:48]?

Today, urgently, we must renew our zeal that flame of burning desire to make God known, loved, and served, and thus save souls.

—Father Andrew Gawrych, C.S.C.



A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:

A Young Adult group has formed at Our Lady Chapel. During Lent, the group has formed prayer buddies so that they can journey together back to God. We celebrate this opportunity to get together, share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life's journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at our next meeting, or contact members Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.



GOD'S SAVING ACTION:

Psalm 10 cries out to God: “Why do you stand afar and pay no heed in times of trouble? Arrogant scoundrels pursue the poor. The wicked boast of their greed, their affairs always succeed!” How many God-loving people feel that way today? Victims of wars, the hungry whose aid is disappearing, and so many others echo the psalmist's cry: “The helpless are crushed. Rise up, O Lord! Do not forget the poor!” But the psalm ends most positively, expressing faith and hope, saying: “But you do see; you take note of misery and sorrow. To you the helpless can entrust their cause.”

This psalm, which feels so appropriate right now, could have been inspired by incident that took place in the Book of Exodus — Moses encountered God in an unquenchable, nondestructive fire, and God, expressing divine passion, said: “I have witnessed the affliction of my people. I have heard their cry; I know well what they are suffering” [Exodus 3:1-15].

Today, many people doubt that.

The Scripture Readings for this 3rd Week in Lent take us into the heart of what causes many to be atheists or skeptical about the existence of a good God. While Jesus was freely journeying toward his ultimate confrontation with evil [see Luke 9:51, people questioned him about sin and suffering. Aghast and titillated by hearing about how Pontius Pilate had not only slaughtered a group of worshippers but then mixed their blood with the temple sacrifices, they asked the implicit question: “What had those people done that God allowed them to perish in that way?” [Luke 13:1-9]. Apparently, they believed that God protects the good, that those who live in safety and enjoy health and wealth are blessed by God. Those who suffer must somehow deserve it.

Even Paul seems to accept that theory when he says of the people in the desert: “God was not pleased, for they were struck down in the desert” Note that Paul does not say: “God punished them by letting them perish;” Paul said that their behavior was not pleasing to God — leaving open the possibility that their waywardness itself both displeased God and led to their demise [1 Corinthians 10:1-12].



Jesus then took the question one step further, citing the accident of a tower that collapsed and killed 18 people. Would God have allowed such things to happen if the victims were innocent? By placing this incident in the context of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem, Luke frames it as an introduction to the mystery of Jesus' coming suffering at the hands of ignorant and evil people with power. How could people understand the death of those who perished in the temple or were crushed by the falling tower? Were they abandoned by God? Jesus tells the crowd: “If you do not repent, you will all perish as they did.” What kind of repentance is Jesus calling for?

We need to remember that repentance — metanoia — is not about penance; it describes a change of mindset. Jesus preached metanoia to encourage people to open their eyes to perceive God's love active among them — the ways God was reigning in their midst.

The belief that God punishes sinners with disaster assumes that we earn our salvation — that God will care for us to the extent that we are good. That might feel fine to the healthy wealthy — as long as they stay that way — but it reflects nothing of the situation of Jesus on the cross or of martyrs like Peter and Paul, St. Oscar Romero or the “holy innocents.”

It seems that rather than shielding the good from evil, God suffers with the suffering. God told Moses: “I see my people's suffering; I hear their cry against injustice.” Because God saw, heard and knew intimately what they suffered, God sent Moses to save the people.

Jesus claimed that he too represented God: “The Spirit has anointed me to proclaim liberty to

are presented as a backdrop for the use of a parable by Jesus. The people tell Jesus about some who were killed by a falling tower, and that others suffered by Pilate's mixing blood with their sacrifices. Jesus reminds them that physical suffering is not caused by sin — a common religious thought at the time. Jesus bends their news back on them. While there was great suffering — and some died — in these events, Jesus reminds his audience that they too will suffer greatly unless they repent. To show them that they have time to experience the compassion of God, he relates a picturesque parable about a fig tree.

God had been patient with Israel, and brought them slowly to be the fruitful people of the Covenant by bringing them out of slavery and into a fruitful land. Now Jesus addresses a people who have withered as mature produce of God's fidelity. Jesus ministers that love in his incarnate presence within Israel. His time will be their time for repenting from unfruitful, un-incarnate lives themselves.

But there is another side to this. Luke might have read Matthew's version of this story [see Matthew 21:18-22]. In Luke's version, a “gardener” talks an owner of an orchard out of cutting down a three-year fruitless fig tree. He argues to be allowed to have another year to “cultivate” the tree — to enrich its soil to help it produce fruit.

That is good news for those of us who find ourselves at the midpoint of Lent and aren't sure we have much to show for it. Our Lord is the patient, compassionate gardener who is ready today to give us more time to produce fruit, by offering to accompany us with grace-filled care these days ahead. Part of the cultivation process is to return to the active, attentive, ongoing reflection that shapes our Lenten journey. We can begin again with the simple question: “How do you want to grow during this season of Lent?” We can pray with desires like these; “Please open my heart to a closer, personal relationship with you.” “Free me with your liberating graces to turn away from all that is selfish, judgmental, hard hearted.” “May the story of your self-sacrificing love for me fill me with the ability to love others as you have loved me.” “Make my heart like yours, allowing me to hear the cry of the poor as you do.” With these or similar words from our hearts, Lent will come alive.

Let us pray that we use the remaining time in Lent to reflect upon the many times God has spoken to our hearts throughout the course of our lives, and to ask for a renewed sense of the Divine here and now, and in the days and years to come.

—taken from the writings of Cindy McMahon, Andy Alexander, S.J., and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — APRIL 19th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Please join us for a great experience.

Please let us know in the Chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

A CALL TO HOLINESS:

We know certainly that our God calls us to a holy life. We know that he gives us every grace, every abundant grace; and though we are so weak of ourselves, this grace is able to carry us through every obstacle and difficulty.”

— St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

In our newspapers we read of disasters and watch catastrophes on television. And we deal with painful tragedies in the lives of our friends and loved ones, and ask: “Where is God?”, “How can God allow these things to go on?” It is implicitly the question put to Jesus in this Gospel account dealing with the fact that the Roman Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate — the same one who condemned Jesus to be crucified — murdered a number of Jews in Jerusalem while they worshipped! He mingled their blood with the blood of their temple sacrifices. It was a terribly shocking thing to do, to say the very least [Luke 13:1-9].

Some people explain away tragedies by telling us that it is sinners who suffer tragedies. Tragedies, they claim, are God’s way of punishing us for our sins, justified punishments from God inflicted upon us for our sins. That, of course, may or may not be true. Why? Because bad things happen to good people — people who are totally innocent suffer terrible tragedies. Jesus makes it crystal clear that personal suffering and personal sin are not always connected. To be sure, most sins bring their own punishment with them. You can think of a whole lot of diseases, pains and illnesses — both physical and mental — that result from behavior that is, shall we say, unhealthy, unnatural, and even bizarre. Still, personal suffering does hit the innocent.

Suffering comes from many causes, not the least of which is simple, random chaos. You and I are joined with God in the vast enterprise of pushing back the boundaries of chaos and establishing cleared space in which order and harmony and peace can be found. That space is bought at a price, the price of whatever it takes to push the forces of chaos away and build boundaries that will protect the ordered and safe space we have cleared.

Suffering also comes from other people’s sins. A good deal of the pain and suffering that we endure in life comes directly from the sinful attitudes and activities found in other people, as well as in their inattentiveness, lazy slothfulness, and above all their indifference. A whole lot of pain comes from those who have a “who cares?” attitude in what they think, say and do.

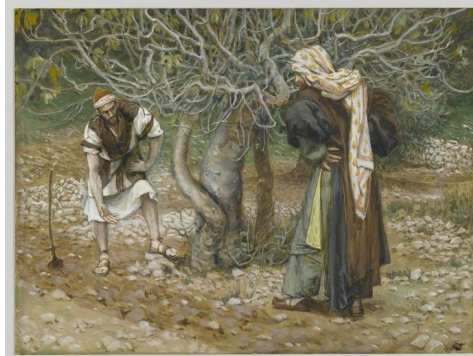
And, to be truthful, we are all sinners. If God were to directly link all suffering with our personal sins the world would not be habitable. We simply couldn’t survive; no one would be safe. As it is, God has not absented Himself from our world. As a matter of fact, He has so loved us that He has sent His only-begotten Son into our world, not to condemn it, but to save us. God has given His son for the life of the world [see John 3:16].

We need to realize that the world will be saved only to the extent that we receive what God gives us in order to save our world. God offers and then waits for us to respond. To the extent that we do not respond, either because of active refusal to surrender to God, or because of our indifference and “who cares?” attitude, to that extent, chaos and the forces of sin will enter into to fill the vacuum and fill our lives with more pain and suffering.

This is why in response to the original question I put to you, Jesus points out the terrible sin of uselessness in His parable about the fig tree. You see, the question is not “Where is God in all of this?” the question is rather “Where have we been?”

Fig trees are supposed to provide figs, to produce the fruit that God made them to produce in the first place. And we, too, have been put on this earth to produce the results for which God gave us life in the first place to produce.

A little lesson in Palestinian horticulture: fig trees over there produce crops of figs three times each



to be loved. What was true for him is true for most of us. It is far easier for us to speak about love than to let ourselves be loved.

Those around us — family and friends — already know all these things about us. It’s time we recognized them too. —taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet

THE WIDENESS OF GOD’S MERCY:

Forgiveness is out of fashion; it is seen in many quarters as a sign of weakness. Witness the lightning quick judgments of social media; regard the savage recrimination heaped on a public figure who errs or strays; consider the online mob justice that springs from misapprehension. We are zealous — most of us — in requiting others according to their perceived offenses — vengeance, not mercy. Even in our relationships with family and friends, forgiveness can be hard to come by. Resentment over a family member’s behavior, bitterness at a slight from a friend or colleague, these linger in our hearts. And we hold them there, tightly gripping our anger at others while telling ourselves that we are merely “holding people accountable.”

God shows us another way to deal with those who offend us — the way of forgiveness. This is not to be a grudging, muttered “never mind.” No, we are to forgive extravagantly and exuberantly — much like the father of the prodigal son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son [see Luke 15]. The psalmist lays this out clearly using a rhetorical device known as “merism,” which uses diametrically opposite terms to convey the idea of totality — “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us” [Psalm 103:11-12].

God’s loving forgiveness, we learn, extends as high as the highest height and spans as wide as the widest width. French priest and spiritual director Father Jacques Philippe writes: “When we refuse to forgive someone for harm done to us, we are increasing the quantity of evil in the world, which has quite enough as it is. Let us not join in the propagation of evil.” Striving to grasp the boundless dimensions of God’s forgiveness, filled with the fullness of that love, this is what we are called to emulate: an embracing mercy that extends — to use another “merism” — from sea to shining sea.

O God of steadfast mercy, Give me the spiritual fortitude and grace to wrap my arms of forgiveness around those who have hurt or offended me. Amen.

—taken from the writings of Betsy Cahill, which appear on the internet

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER or LECTOR?

We are resuming our need for Servers and Lectors. Each and every week, we always are finding that we have a need. Ever since COVID, people seem to not have the same interest and/or desire. But these 2 ministers are so grace-filled — both from God and personally. **Any student who is in the 3rd [and up] grade is invited to become an Altar Server; any student who is in the 5th [and up] grade is invited to become a Lector.** Adults are also welcome to join in our Lectoring ministry.

These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an Altar Server, Lector, or to be involved in any other Ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the Chapel office [440-473-3560].**

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord’s invitation: “I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.” [Jeremiah 24:7]. 15



THREE CONVERSION MOMENTS:

In her masterful book, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, Ruth Burrows has a section within which she lists the faults of those who are beyond initial conversion. What are these faults? Burrows has her own list; what I offer here is the perspective that Henri Nouwen gives in his spiritual masterpiece, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Among many things in that book, Nouwen tells us that as persons who understand ourselves as already committed, we still need to make a three-fold conversion moment — [1] we need to move from being a bystander to being a participant; [2] from being a judge to being a repentant sinner; and [3] from speaking about love to actually letting ourselves be loved. What is involved in each of these?

From being a bystander to being a participant. In essence, what we need to do here is to move from studying life, speaking about it, teaching about it, writing about it, and perhaps even at times mimicking it, to actually living it. I know this sounds very much like a cliché devoid of substance, but a lot of what is wrong in the world, the church, and within our personal lives today is precisely the fact that we study things, talk about them, strongly voice our convictions about them, but often in fact, do little or nothing about them. For example, we do not lack for literature, moral rhetoric, or good analysis on social justice. But there is, in fact, very, very little being done. This is not so much because our passion for justice is insincere, but because at the end of the day we are bystanders — not participants.

The same holds true for prayer. There is no shortage of literature in this area — no shortage of workshops either. We talk enough about prayer. We just don't pray a lot. In terms of deep private prayer, we pray very little. Again, we are much more in the position of the bystander than participant. Therese of Lisieux once wrote: "I always preferred to pray rather than to have spiritual conversations about prayer." For most of us, the opposite is true.

Robert Moor suggests that this failure to move from bystander to participant is a disease that particularly afflicts those among us who do any kind of ministry, or are in any teaching or healing profession. Invariably, we end up studying life and speaking about it, rather than living it. It is no accident that those of us in these vocations frequently feel anger towards anyone who actually does anything. It will also be no accident that when the last tree on the planet has been cut down, there will have been libraries of studies written about the ill-effect of cutting down trees, but very little will have been done by way of action by those who wrote all those books. We generally respond to the issue of violence against children and women in the same way — with yet another study. We are too much bystanders, and not participants.

We must also move from being judge to being repentant sinner. What is meant by this? All of us pray the prayer of the Pharisee — "Thank God that I am not like that other person!" [see Luke 21]. We are all self-righteous — it is only a question of what we are self-righteous about.

We used to stereotype self-righteousness in one phrase — "holier-than-thou". We are all "holier-than-thou", except we each define holiness according to our own idiosyncratic preference — that is, as "more-sensitive-than-thou," "brighter-than-thou," "less-bigoted-than-thou," "less rigid-than-thou," or "more-of-a-victim-thou." In subtle and not so subtle ways, each of us is more judge than repentant sinner.

We stop being a judge only when we claim our proper place among the broken, among God's little ones, the unfaithful, and sinners. Only when we watch the news at night, and recognize that every pathology, every act of violence, and every sin we see on our television screen is also inside of us will we lose all interest in making comparisons, and be content to let God's grace simply work in us.

Finally, we must move from speaking about love to actually letting ourselves be loved. Nouwen uses his own life as an example. For years, he went all over the world giving talks about love — even while not letting those around him really love him. Only after moving in with the physically handicapped — with people who were not interested in what he had to say about love — did he actually allow himself

year. These trees are given every chance to produce; they receive a gardener's care. Their owners have a right to expect them to produce, not to simply wave their pretty leaves in the air. When the master found this fig tree to be yielding nothing, he had every right, if not the duty, to eliminate that fig tree. All it was doing was soaking up water, minerals and other precious resources needed by the other trees to produce their fruit. This tree was good for nothing.

The response of the owner here in this parable was extra tenderness, extra-ordinary care, and a range of "second chances." The owner allowed three seasons, nine chances, to be productive, before it was to be cut down. That fig tree was given no room in which to complain that it wasn't given a chance to produce.

What, then, about us? God has planted us in the midst of His love and grace. Our families and our friends have given us love, our schools have given us education, and our Church has given us God's holy presence, love, and graces. God has offered us His tender, loving care in abundance. How have we responded? How will we respond? Will we just wave our pretty leaves in the air or will we feed the world's hungry, care for the outcast, and be about the tasks of bringing order out of the injustices and chaos in the world around us?

God wants us to finish the story for ourselves. You have perhaps noticed that the parable of the fig tree had no real ending. It just sort of stopped and we don't know what eventually happened to that fig tree. The same is true for you and me. God has given us life and launched us out into our world with a script to follow along with a director, Jesus, to guide us. But how our individual life stories are eventually written depends entirely on how we respond to what God has given us. A merciful God has spared us all, many times over, up to this present moment.

Of what use and just how fruitful will be the rest of your life — and mine? We have no idea what happened to the fig tree. We can have a pretty good idea about what will happen to us. Will we do nothing, or will we give God useful and productive lives spent in accomplishing His work? The responsibility rests upon us — not God. —taken from the writings of Father Charles Irvin which appear on the internet

**MEN'S RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Thursday, May 1st, from 6:00—8:30 PM will be our annual Spring Men's Retreat. All men of Our Lady Chapel and the Gilmour Academy Men's Club and their guests are invited to join us. We will begin with **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 6:00 PM, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts for a light supper, and our evening of discussion, led by Fr. John.** There is no cost, but we are requesting a free will offering for the evening. If you cannot make it for Mass or for dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual conversation — come when you are able! Mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord! **Sign up on the retreat sheet located on the easel in the narthex of Our Lady Chapel or contact Patty in the Chapel Office (440) 473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org**

**WOMEN'S EVENING OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Tuesday, May 6th from 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM will be our annual Women's Spring Retreat. All women of Our Lady Chapel and the Gilmour Academy Women's Club and their guests are invited to join us. We will begin with **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 6:00 PM, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts for a light supper, and our evening of discussion, led by Fr. John.** There is no cost, but we are requesting a free will offering for the evening. If you cannot make it for Mass or for dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual conversation — come when you are able! Mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord! **We will post a sign up sheet on the Easel in the coming weeks. Or you may contact Patty in the Chapel Office at (440) 473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org**



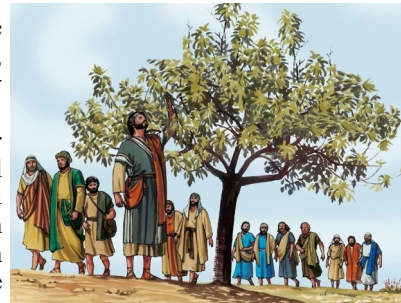
EVIL IS NOT GOD’S WILL:

We do not know everything, and it is dangerous to pretend that we do. God has not revealed all things to us, and it is blasphemous for us to speak as if God did. One of the things that we as Christians know very little about is why bad things happen in our world. We cannot answer the question: “Why do bad things happen to good people?” We cannot even answer the question: “Why do bad things happen to bad people?” When it comes to the origin and source of evil, God has told us very little. We remain largely in the dark.

About six years ago some friends of mine on the west side experienced a terrible tragedy. Their young son of four years old contracted cancer and died. I went to the funeral home and as I was waiting in line to pay my respects, I overheard the woman standing in front of me saying to the grieving parents: “You must be strong. Because it was God’s will for your son to die.” Her words took my breath away! I wanted to scream at her: “How do you know God’s will? And what would make you think that God would ever want the death of this young, innocent child!”

The truth is, we do not know why bad things happen. Saying, “God is responsible,” is an attempt at an explanation — but it is an unfortunate one. It makes God to be a cruel and heartless god who would wish the death of the innocent. Yet, the desire to find an explanation for evil is very strong. Therefore, when evil happens you will always find people seeking to explain why a bad thing is somehow a good thing or why the people who suffer somehow deserve it.

This is what happens in Luke’s Gospel [13:1-9]. Some of the people in the crowd tell Jesus that Pilate murdered some Galileans, and their implication is that the Galileans were killed because they were sinners. Jesus rejects this explanation out of hand. He says: “Do you think those Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans?” Jesus adds another example of evil — an accidental one. He talks about a tower that fell on eighteen people and killed them. Then he asks: “Do you think that those people who died in that way were greater sinners than all the other people in Jerusalem?” Jesus’ answer is clearly “No.” Trying to explain the origins of evil is senseless — we simply do not know.



Now this leads to another very important but subtle distinction. So listen carefully. We do believe that good can come out of evil. We do not believe that God sends evil to us. Let me say that in another way. Even in our darkest moments, Christians believe that God will find a way to bring something good out of the evil that we suffer. That, however, is different from saying that God sends evil to us so that goodness can emerge.

This puts us as Christians in an unbalanced situation. We know that when good things happen to us, they come from God. When we meet our future spouse, when we deliver a healthy baby, when we are fighting cancer and the cancer is defeated, we quickly and correctly say: “This is a blessing that comes from a God who loves us.” The scriptures tell us that all good things come from our Father in heaven. But when bad things happen to us, we do not have a similar explanation. It is wrong to say that my marriage failed because God wanted it, that my child was born with a birth defect because that was God’s will, that the treatment for my cancer did not work because it was a part of God’s plan. If we undergo a divorce and grow personally from the experience, it is appropriate to thank God for the growth. It is not appropriate to say that God ended my marriage so that I could grow. When a loved one dies of cancer, it is sometimes the case that the family pulls together and is able to express their love for each other in ways that was never possible before. It is right for that family to thank God for the honesty and intimacy which the death occasioned. It is not right to believe that God wanted our mother’s death so that we might pull together as a family. In every situation, when it comes to the reason for evil in our lives, the

Presence in the sick, the poor, the hurting, etc. But those are all in the future. What if the future does not come? Towers fall. Tragedies happen. What are you — what are we — doing to serve the Lord right now? How are we bearing fruit for His Kingdom today and tomorrow?

You might say: “I’m a busy working mother or father. I intend on giving time for the Lord when I retire. Yes, I probably should have brought the kids to help at that homeless shelter, but time is limited. Charity will have to come later.” But, maybe later will never come. Maybe the grace to get into action is for right here, right now.

Everyone thinks that there will be plenty of time to do wonderful things for the Lord when they retire. Ask the seniors. Seniors, ask yourselves: “Do you have the ability and the energy to do all the good you always hoped you would do? Do you regret the times you could have gone into action but ‘tabled’ working for the Lord?”

We cannot put off being kind to people. Do we do that? Do we think that “I’m in a bad mood today. I’ll be nice tomorrow? If so we are not bearing fruit. Do we look at that person who is all alone, the social misfit, and try to bring her or him into our group? Or do we say: “Maybe tomorrow I’ll talk to him, spend some time with her?” If we put it off we are not bearing fruit.

Do we realize that others depend on us for our prayers? Every time we come to Mass, we ask God to watch over our families, our friends, and all those in need. You are bearing fruit even as we speak. Most of us work hard at doing our best to live as committed Catholics. We are trying to be moral people. We all have acquaintances who may have few moral guidelines in their lives. These people see that we do control ourselves, and yet, we are happier than those who are out of control. Maybe now — maybe sometime in the future — the Holy Spirit will jar their memories, and they think about our happiness, and then decide to live moral lives. And we will be bearing fruit.

Life is wonderful. Life is precious. Life is also short. We have got to make the best use of every day that we are granted. We are each the fig tree in the parable. The Father owns the vineyard; the Son is the gardener giving us the ability to grow. The Spirit is the gifts that we have which will attract others. But we have free will. It is up to us to choose to bear fruit for the Lord.

As we look at our lives during Lent, we ask ourselves: Are we bearing fruit?

—taken from the writings for Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration Form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

A collection box is located just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the collection box. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

Total Offerings: Saturday [3/15/25] _____ \$ 205.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [3/16/25] _____ \$ 379.00

BEAR FRUIT NOW!

Are you a procrastinator? I was going to talk about this last week, but I put it off. Some people are world class procrastinators. They even have their own club. The club hasn't met yet, but they are planning on it. Let's start with a somewhat typical family dialogue.

Mom — "Did you finish your science project yet?"

Frank — "It's not due for another two weeks, Mom."

Mom — "Have you finished it yet?"

Frank — "I've got another week, Mom."

Mom — "Don't tell me you haven't even started the science project yet. Isn't it due this Friday?"

Frank — "It's OK, Mom. I always work better under pressure."

Frank — "Excuse me, Mr. Crabapple. Can I get an extension on my science project?"

I had the flu yesterday."

And so the drama of procrastination plays out. And Teens, if you think you are the only ones who procrastinate, ask your parents if they finished their taxes yet, or when they finished them last year. On second thought, don't — life will be a lot easier for you.

When we procrastinate, we put pressure on ourselves to complete a task at the last minute. We are also assuming that nothing will happen to prevent our finishing — or even starting — our work. But life, though, often throws monkey wrenches into our plans. As a result, we often never get around to it.

That is what happened in the case of the two events Jesus mentions in Luke's Gospel [13:1-9]. Eighteen people were killed when a tower in Siloam fell on them. A large number of people from Gallilee — we don't know how many — were killed by Pilate's soldiers during a temple service. All had plans for their lives. All of their lives came to a sudden end with their plans unfulfilled.

Jesus' mentions these tragedies as an introduction to his parable about procrastination. The farmer has a fig tree that hasn't born any fruit for three years. He was going to cut it down, but the gardener convinced him to give it a little more time — one more year. If at the end of another year, it still hasn't accomplished its purpose, born fruit, then it will be cut down.

We are the fig trees. We have been planted in the Kingdom of God to bear fruit for the King. We are being warned that we have to make the best use of the time we have.

Augustine of Hippo was a world class procrastinator — at least when it came to the spiritual life. He knew he should change his life, reject his immoral life-style, and embrace Christianity, but he kept putting it off. Through the prayers of his mother, St. Monica, Augustine finally did become a fervent Christian, but he would lament in his autobiography, *the Confessions*, that he wasted so much time — "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you!" Matt Maher does a wonderful job framing Augustine's lament in his song, *Alive Again*. Augustine looked at his life, and realized that he could have done so much more for the Kingdom of God, and would have been so much happier in his life, if he had not wasted so much time, if he had not procrastinated.

How about you? How about me? How are we bearing fruit for the Lord right now? You might say: "Well, I'm just a student in high school. I'm preparing for the future." Yes, in the future you may be gifted with children to lead to the Lord. Yes, in the future you may enter a career — like a nurse or doctor or social worker or priest — which directly serves the Lord through His people. Yes, as an adult you may become very active in various charities, reaching out to those who need help and serving His



simple answer is we do not know. We must insist God is not the source of evil.

This truth applies even to the Paschal Mystery — the life, the death the resurrection of Jesus. One of the great services that Mel Gibson has done in making his movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, is that he has generated a conversation among ordinary Christians as to what is the saving power of Jesus' death. We do believe that all of Jesus' life — his life, his death, his resurrection — was the means of our salvation. So it is true to say that we are saved through Jesus' suffering and death. But even as we say that, we must remember that Jesus' suffering and death was something evil. It was wrong. It was unjust. It was cruel. Even though we call the day on which Jesus died Good Friday, we must not forget that it was primarily Bad Friday. For on that day an innocent man was cruelly, brutally, and unjustly crucified. In that sense we must assert that God was not responsible for Jesus' death. It was not God's desire that Jesus die. Yet out of that evil death, we do believe that God drew our salvation.

So why is it so important that we consistently protect God from being the cause of evil? Two reasons. The first is that if we believe that evil is the result of God's will, we can grow to become complacent about it. If we believe that evil is a part of God's plan, we may grow lax in opposing it. Yet we as Christians must oppose evil at every turn. We must use our energies to attack sickness, to oppose injustice, to reject violence. We must oppose the death of the innocent with the same strenuous commitment that we would have opposed Jesus' own death.

The second reason that we must insist that God is not the cause of evil is that such a belief distorts our picture of God and of ourselves. If God is somehow responsible for evil, then God becomes a cruel and heartless god, which is untrue. If God sends us evil, then we must be guilty or bad people which is not necessarily the case.

We do not know everything. When good things happen to us we rightly claim that they are blessings from a God who loves us. When evil things happen to us, we must admit in all humility we do not understand why. Therefore, when evil touches our lives, we should not try to explain it or pretend that we understand it. What we must do instead is entrust ourselves to God and to others for support, believing that the same God who brought our salvation out of the evil of Jesus' death, will not allow our own sufferings to be wasted. Even as we believe that God does not send bad things to us, we continue to trust that God will walk with us and somehow bring blessings from the evil we endure.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

LENTEN NOTES:

The season of Lent has begun. During this sacred time, each of us is called to spiritual growth — particularly through a turning away from sin. Lent is a time for "new beginnings" — a time to grow in our relationship with God and each other. There are 3 major spiritual practices during Lent to which Scripture calls us: **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.**

—LENTEN REGULATIONS:

Ash Wednesday and **Good Friday** are days of **fast** for all between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine. Fasting means that one full meal for the day is allowed, along with two light meals [snacks]. No eating between meals. Those not included in these "ages" are encouraged to take upon themselves some aspects of the **fast**, whenever possible.

Ash Wednesday and **All Fridays** during Lent are days of **abstinence** from meat, for those who are fourteen and older. Again, those not included in these "ages" are encouraged to participate whenever possible.

DON'T QUIT:

The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

—Thomas Edison



BECOME AUTHENTIC:

Luke's Gospel for this 3rd Week in Lent [Luke 13:1-9] is in two parts. In the first part, Jesus makes a statement about his suffering — and how it is not necessarily a punishment for sin. The is accompanied by a warning from Jesus that we need to repent. In the second part, Jesus tells a parable about the fig tree which produces no fruit — the keeper of the fig tree says to the master that he needs to give it one more year before he would cut it down.

Let's look at these in a little more depth. First, there the problem of disasters — man made or natural — and whether they are a punishment for sin. While this was a predominant way of thinking in the ancient world — when superstitious people thought that any disaster was surely because the victims had sinned and were being punished by God — the thought even is present today. Others realize that disasters don't happen because of sin, but because of human will, or negligence, or from natural causes. Jesus uses these examples though to underline the need for everyone to repent — a constant subject of his preaching throughout his public ministry.

This is not a message that we can ignore, and this is especially so as we experience Lent which is a special time of focus on repentance in the Church. No one knows the day or the hour when they will have to give an account of themselves to God. No one knows when they will be called to meet their maker.

Like those people in the tower at Siloam, we can die as the result of an unforeseen accident. We can die as we cross the road later on today, or we could be subject to a sudden heart attack this afternoon. If anything like this happens to us, we will have no time to repent, and we could end up meeting our maker with a heavy burden of sin on our souls. Of course, the answer to this is to make regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation — to frequently repent of our sins and to constantly be asking God for forgiveness throughout our lives.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not as frequently used as it used to be — it seems to have fallen out of favor. I suppose there are many reasons for this, but one surely is that we are more and more reluctant to confide our sins to another person. This could be due to embarrassment or to thinking that our sins are unimportant; but whatever the reason, this surely is a serious error.

The fact of the matter is that in Confession, the priest is generally friendly and helpful — it is his job to help the penitent and to dispense God's forgiveness. A friendly chat in Confession every few months is a good thing, and it helps us to keep on the right track in life, and it gives us the opportunity to unburden ourselves and to experience reconciliation.

The second part of the Gospel contains the Parable of the Fig Tree — an interesting parable indeed. In this parable, God is clearly the master who shows himself to be prepared to chop down the unfruitful tree. The worker in the vineyard is obviously meant to be Christ, who asks the master to wait one more year before getting rid of the tree, allowing him more time to manure it and tend it, so that it might eventually produce good fruit.

Many scholars think that the Fig Tree represents Israel, and that the three years represents Christ's Public Ministry. He is asking the Father to allow Israel one more chance — to let him make his sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary which will be the final opportunity for the Jews to accept Christ before attention is turned to the Gentiles.

What we have then is two incidents from the life of Christ put next to each other — the story about the Tower of Siloam and this parable about the Fig Tree. They are placed alongside each other because



Luke thinks that there might be some sort of connection between them. You can imagine him as an editor with a large amount of material which he is trying to put in order. However, the only real connection here is the need for people to repent and to accept Christ into their lives.

In the Book of Exodus [3:1-15] we read about Moses' encounter with God on the mountain when he is given his mission to rescue the People of Israel from slavery in Egypt and when God reveals his name. The Exodus is the definitive event in the history of Israel — it is commemorated by Jews every year right down to the present day. It is an important event for Christians too, because it foreshadows the journey towards our own salvation. It provides us with a model for our own journey out of sin into the Promised Land of Heaven.

This theme of the Exodus is taken up by Paul in his Letter to the Church at Corinth [1 Corinthians 10:1-12]. Paul reminds his readers about the Exodus and tells them that it is also a warning to them not to sin as many of their ancestors did. Paul points out that the rock from which they drank in the Desert was in fact Christ the source of all salvation. He reminds the Corinthians that although we have discovered the truth and have placed our trust in Jesus, we still have to be careful and not give in to sin otherwise we will be lost.

Another thing we learn from the Moses' encounter with God is God's name. God says to Moses that he is called "I am who I am." This is something extremely enigmatic. It is unprecedented in the history of religion for a God to be given such a name.

By revealing that this is his name, God is basically saying that he is the author of all life, that he is the source of all existence — that he is where being itself comes from. This name that God gives himself shows that he is utterly unique and above all other gods and that he is the only source of salvation.

We are in the middle of Lent; we have a lot to think about, but the message of the readings for this 3rd Week in Lent is clear — it is that the task that lies before us is one of repentance. This means that we need to examine our consciences carefully, and admit to God our sin and unworthiness, and in all humility seek his forgiveness.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., which appear on

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	2 Kings 5:1-15, Luke 4:24-30
Tuesday:	Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10, Hebrews 10:4-10 Luke 1:26-38
Wednesday:	Deuteronomy 4:1-9, Matthew 5:17-19
Thursday:	Jeremiah 7:23-28, Luke 11:14-23
Friday:	Hosea 14:2-10, Mark 12:28-34
Saturday:	Hosea 6:1-6, Luke 18:9-14
4th Week in Lent:	Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

FAITH EDUCATION — SCHEDULE:

Meeting dates for April are 6th, 13th, and 27th. Faith Education is an important part of every person's formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility for your children. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

