



AMDG
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
YEAR C
24TH MARCH 2019



**‘My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues me’**

Entrance Antiphon

OPENING PRAYER

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness,
who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving
have shown us a remedy for sin,
look graciously on this confession of our lowliness,
that we, who are bowed down by our conscience,
may always be lifted up by your mercy.

The Hebrew slaves in Egypt have forgotten the Lord’s goodness to them. But Moses, going about his ordinary business, is attentive enough to notice the Lord drawing near and willing enough to ‘go forward to look’, when he is called (*First Reading*). He is then sent by God to remind the people of Israel that the Lord is compassion and love (*Psalms*).

St Paul uses this Exodus story as the basis for his homily (*Second Reading*) to the church community based at Corinth. Corinth is a bustling, cosmopolitan city with a reputation for indulgence and temples aplenty, but Paul isn’t intimidated and makes it his headquarters for the mission to the west. However, it does explain the stern tone of his letter.

Jesus, too, gives us a warning in today’s *Gospel*. He calls us to repent, telling us that God desires that we bear fruit, promising us every opportunity to work with his grace.

In the coming days, let’s listen to the Lord who is faithful in both word and name (‘I Am’) as the One who acts in our lives.

FIRST READING EXODUS 3: 1–8, 13–15 (part)

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,’ Moses 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 fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God. ...

Then Moses said to God, ‘I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel ... 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 is what you must say to the sons of Israel: “I Am has sent me to you.”’ And God also said to Moses, ‘You are to 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.’

As I come to prayer, I might ask for a greater sensitivity to the Lord’s presence – the One who invites me, as he did Moses, to draw ever closer.

God reveals himself to Moses as the God of our ancestors. I may like to think back over my own history, perhaps recalling times of grace and blessing. I ponder God’s goodness to me across the years.

Perhaps there are painful memories too ... I remember that God was witness to these also.

Maybe I feel I have been brought to a better place now?

Or perhaps I am still waiting?

With confidence, I ask the Lord for whatever I need: trust ... patience... courage ... hope ... freedom ...

God’s name, ‘I Am who I am’, reveals the One who is present in human history. God is also active in my life and calls me, like Moses, to bear fruit.

How might I be more attentive to the presence of God in each and every moment?

In what ways can I respond more generously to that presence as I go about my ordinary business?

I end by saying, very slowly and with conviction, ‘Here I am, Lord’.

GOSPEL LUKE 13: 1-9

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.”’

I enter this time of prayer slowly. As I prepare to ponder this challenging Gospel, I ask for the loving guidance of the Holy Spirit and a deeper confidence in the Lord’s compassion and love. I become still.

As I read, I notice what words strike me ... where am I being drawn?
Perhaps I am like someone trying to make sense of life’s tragedies ...
or trying to figure out who deserves what and why?

Maybe I sense, in the middle of Lent, that I am face-to-face with Jesus the ‘discomforter’ ... how does this make me feel?

I may recall occasions when I have suffered unfairly ... ?

... or when I have judged others unfairly, perhaps seeing myself as ‘better’ than them? I ponder.

The Lord desires to feed and nurture me. Where, in my life, do I see God’s loving tenderness, as he helps me grow and become more fruitful? Where might I be called to take this same love to others, especially those who seem less deserving? Again I ponder ...

How does Jesus seem to me now?

I talk to him with great trust from the heart ...

As I end my prayer, I ask to be aware of the Lord tending to me, nourishing me, perhaps even pruning me, so that I can bear fruit by going out and doing the same for others. *Glory be ...*

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

'Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings.
I mean to deliver them.'

First Reading

The Lord is compassion and love.

Psalm

The one who thinks they are safe must be careful
that they do not fall.

Second Reading

'Leave the fig tree one more year.'

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

Exodus 3: 1-8, 13-15; Ps. 102 (103); 1 Cor. 10: 1-6, 10-12; Luke 13: 1-9



O come,
O come, Adonai
in burning bush
on Sinai,
the flame that holds us
still in awe,
to etch in flesh
the living law.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
The marks of pain
shall show
the law of love
most plain.

Jim Cotter (d. 2014)



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