



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY March 24 & BEYOND”

"The Other Chance”



What a blessing this Sunday is in Lent with two very, very familiar stories from the bible. One is the story of the Burning Bush, or perhaps we could call it the story of “the Bush that Didn’t Burn Up Even as it Looked like it should have”.

Yes, a miracle. And, yes, “The Burning Bush” as a title is simpler. This was a real-time miracle that Moses not only observed from afar, but also right up close to it (so, you can’t say it was simply a mirage in the wilderness heat). The other story is of the Barren Fig Tree. Or perhaps, the story of “the fruitless fig tree that was given an extension.” It was a parable that Jesus told. A parable is a teaching tool to get a point across, a moral and/or Truth about the Kingdom of God. Let me share it with you. You’ll know the parable as you read it.

13:6 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. ⁹And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' " Luke: 13:6-9 (RSV-CE2)

God gives us all an extension! Here are some thoughts on that theme by the Jesuit, Fr. Donal Neary.

- “Life is often a matter of falling and getting up. Lent – give up something and start again. Rows in a marriage or family and we try again. Fig tree was barren, but got another chance.
- Give it one more chance. God never points the finger. Always an extension! Another chance! In our lives we feel judged often by God and condemned. This is never the case. Allow the flow of love to enter those dark sides of ourselves.
- You could imagine people pointing the finger at the tree. No fruit again. Like we do often. Cast the first stone, see the speck in the other’s eye and not the beam in our own. We are good finger pointers.
- To change, the tree needs nourishment and feeding, and care. We need that too. There is the nourishment of our lives in prayer, Mass, and the way we care for each other. We are supported always by the love of God.”

Isn't that the Truth, that we are supported always by the love of God. Of course, there is a day coming when the extensions end their course! And since we do not know when that day will come, then NOW is the Day to file for that extension, so to speak!

Let's add to Fr. Neary's reflection by adding in that story of the Burning Bush (it comes from the Book of Exodus, Chapter 3). Don't we all need to know that there is a tree that never burns! And the voice and the burning itself tell us that such a tree exists, and that is God. His love spreads in his care for us. The God of Moses is the one who always is, and the one whose very heart is compassion, another word for mercy.

That mercy tells us that there is in fact with God "the other chance" – a need we all have and will always exist in life. For instance, we know the struggles of people in addiction who needed "the other chance" and believed in themselves and in God. Beyond our own strengths as people in need, people who have turned away from a life of crime will have had people who gave them another chance. Teachers know the value of believing again in a student, whether that first-grader child, or the struggling 2nd year college student. We are people always given another chance by God to move on in greater faith and strength and in repentance when necessary, and WE are his people who – like Henri Nouwen's "wounded healers" -- WE are the people of God who are called to try to give another chance to others.

The Burning Bush will eventually stop burning, but it will miraculously never be consumed. The fig tree with the help of the compassion of others, and an agreeable owner, will have the chance to still be a bearer of fruit.

Lord, help the reader of this reflection know and believe that you never give up on them, or anyone. May I be the same!

Father Robert Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 3:1-15 Psalm 103:1-11, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Luke 13:1-9

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: **The Third Sunday in Lent**

8:30a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)

5:15pm Evening Prayer (St. Mary's Chapel)

5:45pm Soup Supper (Parish Hall)

6:15pm Lenten Study "All in Prayer, and A Place for Everyone and Everyone in Their Place (Parish Hall)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue*—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

MONDAY: 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)
Lenten Study follows Mass "Why Luke in Lent?"

WEDNESDAY: Noon Stations of the Cross (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY: 6:15pm Stations of the Cross (St. Mary's Chapel)

AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)