



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



3rd Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

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'Sir, let [the fig tree] alone for one more year, and I shall fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' Luke 13:9

This passage is placed here in our third Sunday of Lent to be a call to repentance. Luke's gospel recalls two events that are recorded nowhere else in the bible or in secular histories. The point is that those killed in both incidents were not particularly great sinners. They were no more guilty than anyone else, yet their lives came to a quick end. The implication is that we all need to repent without delay for we do not know the day or the hour of our own ending – this is the great challenge of our Lenten discipline.

The parable of the fig tree indicates Jesus Christ is patiently dwelling within us through His Church as we, over time, ascend the Pilgrims Way of the Cross. Even though the fig tree in the parable has borne no fruit for three years the gardener will give it another chance. But here Jesus demands a personal decision. We must change and be fruitful if we are to live in His light. What is entailed in this change? People tend to look outward as they consider their fate and the fate of others. People then tend to connect this ill-perceived assumption as that of the will of God. But Jesus is calling us through this parable to turn our way of thinking around and instead *seek from within* to be in touch with the will of God. It is in this way that we can then positively construct the outward events of our life, rather than be swayed by the winds of a fate not our own. If we live with our roots in the holy ground of the Church, God will set us aflame with His life-giving love.

In Jesus' time, it was Israel who was being given another chance. Today it is us. Even with this note of compassionate patience on God's part, this parable stresses the urgency to redirect our lives. Life is shorter than we sometimes think.

Reflect on this passage with a sense of urgency toward repentance. Look with your inner eye to reorder your priorities this Lent. Make intentional your Rule of Life. Let your reflection be your clarion call to enliven your mission in the marketplace. Then you will be equipped to encourage those you encounter to turn toward Christ and let his light shine down for all to see.

A reading from the gospel according to Luke.

Jesus was teaching the crowds;
some of those present told Jesus about the Galileans
whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
Jesus asked them,

*"Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way
they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?*

No, I tell you;

but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

Or those eighteen who were killed

when the tower of Siloam fell on them -

do you think that they were worse offenders

than all the others living in Jerusalem!

No, I tell you;

but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then Jesus told this parable:

"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;

and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

So he said to the gardener, 'See here!

For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none.

Cut it down!

Why should it be wasting the soil?'

The gardener replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year,

until I dig around it and put manure on it.

If it bears fruit next year, well and good;

but if not, you can cut it down.'"

The Gospel of the Lord