

## HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT – YEAR C

God in his love for us gives the way to live fruitful lives in the midst of struggle and adversity. God knows well what we are suffering. He has come to rescue us and to lead us into communion with Himself. The book of Exodus tells the story of God revealing Himself to Moses in the burning bush. “There an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush” (Exod. 3:2). God reveals his name as “I am who am” (Exod. 3:14). From the compassionate heart of the one true God the Israelites are led from slavery into freedom. “The Lord said, ‘I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have 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 from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey’” (Exod. 3:7-8). Exodus tells the story how in their journey in the desert the Israelites learn over and over again that the Lord is kind and merciful and always faithful as God’s chosen people struggle with infidelity and lack of trust (Psalm 103).



Our Loving Father witnesses our affliction and failure to live faithfully and has sent his only Son to free us from sin and death. In today’s gospel Jesus tells a parable of the fig tree that is slow to bear fruit in order to show the loving patience of God. It is only in the fertile ground of God’s love and our response to His love, by living a holy and virtuous life, that good fruit will come forth. Disciples of Jesus will live fruitful lives only in true freedom. “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ...For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as

an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another” (Gal 5:1,13). In the second reading, St. Paul encourages us not to desire evil things, taking care not to fall (1 Cor 10:12).

As we live out these days of Lenten observance we are well aware of our human weakness and also our strength in Christ. Saint Pope John Paul II teaches, “In this struggle between good and evil, man proves to be *stronger thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit who, working within the human spirit, causes its desires to bear fruit in the good*” (TOB 51:6). As we seek greater freedom from our compulsions through prayer, fasting and almsgiving we enjoy greater freedom to love God and others. It is with purity of heart that we love. We hear again from Saint Pope John Paul II, “Man must learn to be the authentic master of his own innermost impulses, like a watchman who watches over a hidden spring, and finally able to draw from all these impulses what is fitting for purity of heart” (TOB 48:3).

Jesus always loves us and desires to give us more. Our ultimate goal is to gain greater self-mastery and grow in purity of heart as we receive the love of Jesus in our hearts and one day share in God’s eternal life forever. “Purity is a requirement of love. It is the dimension of the inner truth of love in man’s heart” (TOB 49:7).

As we hear today’s readings may we flourish through self-mastery and purity of heart, reaching the true holiness that God wants for us.



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