

Third Sunday of Lent C2025

I would like to open this third Sunday of Lent with a statement: "Our God is patient, compassionate and merciful. His patience goes beyond our faults; his forgiveness beyond our sins. His heart is bigger than we can imagine embracing both the sinners and the just. He does not judge us according to our sins; but according to his mercy. He always offers us a second chance where people have gone astray. This is how he has to be remembered through all generations as the God who cares and forgives."

I draw this statement from today's readings. Let me start with the story of Israel. While they were suffering in Egypt, God intervened by the hand of Moses to set the children of Israel free and put an end to their pain. By doing so, God showed that he is not indifferent or insensitive to the misery of his people. He cares for and acts in favor of those who belong to him.

As with God, in Lenten season we are called to care for our brothers and sisters in need. That is what justifies the task of almsgivings and works of charity in this period of time. We have to remember, however, that it is impossible to ignore people and to pretend loving them. Love starts with the awareness of noticing, caring and, then, doing something for the needy. When we truly love people, we start paying attention to what is going on in their lives. That is what God did with the Israelites when they were in Egypt.

The caring disposition of God challenges us in our relationships with one another. How often do we pay attention to the misery of people around us? How much are our hearts touched by the tears on the faces of suffering people? Do not we often say, "This is not my business"?

God is not only caring; he is also forgiving and merciful. This character of God is highlighted in today's Gospel as Luke reports the episode of people Pilate killed while they were offering a sacrifice, and that of those who perished when the tower fell on them.

We have to remember that in the Old Testament, misfortune was often seen as God's punishment following the sin someone has committed. In that perspective, when people came to talk to our Lord about those killed by Pilate, they wanted him to validate their conception of misfortune as a consequence of sin.

For our Lord, there is no link between sin and bad luck, or the death of individuals. Those who were killed by Pilate or crushed by the falling tower were no worse than anybody else. They were not the greatest sinners of all the inhabitants of Galilee or Jerusalem. In other words, if nothing bad has ever happened to you personally, it is not because you are a saint, but rather because God grants you an extra time to repent. He is patient with you.

That explains the parable of the fig tree in the last part of the Gospel. Here God plays a double role: He is the owner of the vineyard who has a fig tree that has not borne fruit for three years. So he decides to cut it down because it is exhausting the soil without producing anything. But, God is also the vine-dresser who looks at the fig tree and thinks that if he gives it one more chance then perhaps it might bear fruit. Our God is always willing to give us another chance.

In other words, if we are still alive, despite the sins we have committed throughout our lives, it is because God loves us, and is patient with us. He gives us an extra time to convert. He gives us a second chance and we have to take advantage of it.

The period of Lent we have started is a time when the Church reminds us of God's patience and the fragility of our human condition. We cannot be aware of our fragility without being humbled and asking forgiveness of God for our sins. Our Lord is inviting us with insistence to change our wrong ways that can only lead us to death and ruin.

We have to transform ourselves and change our ways of being and behaving. If we have not yet decided to change our thoughts and behaviors, it is high time that we start doing it. Our Lord is inviting us to look at this Lenten period as a period of grace and a second chance.

If we take the Lenten period seriously, we can understand why the history of Israel becomes important for us today. What happened in the time of Israel was in order to give us a warning, St Paul says in the second reading. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.

This third Sunday of Lent reminds us of God's patience and mercy. It invites us to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to work for our conversion. God wants us to be saved. He gives us always a second chance. Let us not neglect the grace he gives us in the sacraments and to use it for our eternal salvation. To delay for tomorrow what we can do today for our salvation is presumptuous and dangerous. Amen.

Exodus 3: 1-8a, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10: 1-6, 10-12; Luke 13: 1-9



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