

Third Sunday of Lent



Prayer for Patience

O God,
like the patient gardener,
you give us plenty of time.
You nurture us and await our fruit,
even when it's slow.
Thank you for never condemning,
always waiting.
Teach us to be like yourself,
eager to see others do good,
nourishing their efforts,
rarely criticizing their delays.
May we see you
in all the gardens of our lives,
coaxing forth beautiful figs.
We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, March 3, 2013

Waiting for Us

Today's Readings: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11 (8a); 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9. The disasters of Jesus's time sound remarkably similar to those we experience today. Still there are people who question whether those who died of flood, disease, or earthquake were guilty of grave sin. Jesus dismissed that speculation, for then and for all time, when he said, in short, "nonsense!"

His approach is closer to the fig tree owner who patiently allows time and space for the barren tree to produce. On one hand, his restraint in allowing another year is admirable. On the other hand, it should motivate: we have limited time to get our acts together. How much procrastination and lame excuse-making hinders our goals?

If we're honest, we see how patient God has been with us, delaying the natural consequences of our sometimes thoughtless actions, and protecting us from the effects of our own stupidity. Even when we don't think about God, God provides us with the nurturing we need, equivalent to the tree's fertilizer and water. Like other Gospel narratives, this one is open-ended. The genius of the story is that it's unresolved. We don't know if, given a grace period, the tree ever bore figs.

More important, perhaps, is how the dilemma is resolved in our own lives. Will we turn from other distractions and bear fruit? Or will we stall and get easily sidetracked from our true purpose: union with God who never condemns, and always awaits us patiently?



This Week at Home

Monday, March 4

St. Casimir

The patron saint of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia was heir to the throne of Poland, but reigned only briefly during his father's absence. Although expected to work for his father's political interests, his true allegiance was to God. He spent hours in prayer and fasting, and had a gentle demeanor. Casimir refused marriage and died at twenty-three of a lung ailment. In today's first reading, Naaman, the leper, is healed and converted by the prophet, Elisha. Today's Readings: 2 Kings 5:1-15b; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4 (See 42:3); Luke 4:24-30.

Tuesday, March 5

Giving What We've Received

Today's parable reveals Jesus's understanding of human nature. After being forgiven a debt, it's natural to forgive others in turn. When Peter suggests forgiving seven times, he must feel magnanimous; the rabbis of his day suggested three times. When Jesus proposed a number that symbolizes infinity, Peter must have been shocked. On the international scene, violence often continues because forgiveness never enters the harsh equations. This story's sharp conclusion prompts us to ask where we've been hypocritical, receiving mercy, but refusing to extend it. Today's Readings: Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9 (6a); Matthew 18:21-35.

Wednesday, March 6

Fulfillment: Finding the Full

Significance

Jesus's support of the Law in today's Gospel seems to contrast with his practice: curing on the Sabbath, incurring the wrath of religious leaders, and questioning Hebrew purity laws and dietary restrictions. He models for us a deep approach to faith: understanding and honoring the essence of the Law, and not being tied to superficial or literal interpretations. Lent is a fine time to take advantage of adult education opportunities

at the parish or nearby retreat houses. Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20 (12a); Matthew 5:17-19.

Thursday, March 7

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

Using a spiritual technique of St. Ignatius of Loyola, imagine that you were the son of Perpetua or daughter of Felicity, her servant. Try to understand why your mother was martyred for Christ, despite her often expressed love for you. Reflect on what Perpetua declared in prison about her Christianity shortly before she died: "For this cause came we willingly unto this, that our liberty might not be obscured. For this cause have we devoted our lives." Today's Readings: Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9 (8); Luke 11:14-23.

Friday, March 8

St. John of God

If you were ill, just out of prison, or dying in the early 1500s in Grenada, Spain, you would be graced to find the house of St. John of God. There you would be welcomed, warmed, fed, and treated with tenderness. You might not know that the kindly man washing your feet had been a raucous soldier until age 40. Then, his longing for family and home led him back to childhood faith, and profound transformation. Learning his story, you might see that there is hope for all, and that we "are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12: 34). Today's Readings: Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17 (see 11 and 9a); Mark 12:28-34.

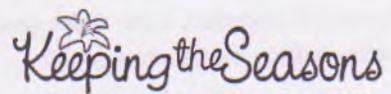
Saturday, March 9

St. Frances of Rome

Born in 1384 into a wealthy home, Frances combined service to the poor with prayer and family life. When two of her three children died of plague, she made part of her home a hospital. Women today juggling multiple responsibilities will appreciate that she wrote insightfully about finding God in her work: "a married woman must leave God at the altar to find Him in her domestic cares." Today's Readings: Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab (see Hosea 6:6); Luke 18:9-14.



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