

# Read

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7,  
8, 11

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

## LIVING THE WORD

### Third Sunday of Lent

March 20, 2022



#### REFLECTION

The gardener sees potential in the fig tree. The owner of the vineyard only sees a barren tree. What good is the tree if it does not bear fruit? But what the owner doesn't see is all the work being done under the soil. Fruit develops on its own time. We cannot rush the growth of plants.

Similarly, we cannot rush our own growth and discernment (the spiritual practice of making important life decisions). Like the fig tree, we sometimes need another year to produce fruit, or make the decision best for us. More tilling, more weeding, more watering must be done. Give it a little time, the wise gardener says.

And yet, we can't wait around forever. At some point, the gates close. The pathways vanish. The trees get cut down. We learn from today's parable that good discernment requires time, attention, and prayer. God plants the seeds. We till the soil. Together with God, there comes a point in which we need to see if the trees of our lives will bear fruit, or if it's really time to cut it down and move on to the next opportunity.



#### ACTION

Scripture is filled with garden imagery. Such imagery falls flat if it stays in story mode. In order to connect with ideas about tilling soil, weeding, watering, and cutting trees, it's important to get our hands dirty. Make these images come to life this week. Volunteer at a local garden. Talk to a parent about planting a small vegetable garden at home. Buy a small houseplant that you can take care of.

Learn more about the process of discernment from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality.

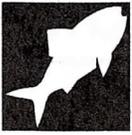
Check out this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-mAkkLTlqQ>



#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What big discernments or decisions do you need to tend to these days?
- ❖ How will you know if the discernment might bear fruit?



March 20, 2022

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### LECTIONARY #30C

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today's Gospel is not necessarily easy to hear. As human beings, we tend to compare ourselves with others and look for someone to blame. It is important to recognize these feelings, and today's Gospel provides an opportunity to do so in light of God's abundant mercy and patience. This is an especially important topic to discuss with the young people who are often conditioned with a mentality of invincibility. The first part of the Gospel passage reminds us that we are not invincible and that sin affects everyone. The second part of the Gospel reminds us of our hope in God's forgiveness and patience.

**Q FOCUS:** *Christian life is a process that requires patience and hope.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week we celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord on March 25. This feast occurs nine months before Christmas and commemorates the angel Gabriel announcing the Good News to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God. We are reminded of God's faithfulness to his promises of mercy and salvation for the whole human race. We also recall Mary's humble obedience and openness to allowing God to work through her. In the midst of this season of Lent, we reflect on the ways in which we respond to God and how we allow him to transform our lives.

### Church Teaching Connection

"In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. We are free to apply our intelligence towards things evolving positively, or towards adding new ills, new causes of suffering and real setbacks. This is what makes for the excitement and drama of human history, in which freedom, growth, salvation and love can blossom, or lead towards decadence and mutual destruction" (*Laudato si'*, 79).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.**

### Gospel

Luke 13:1-9

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people

who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”

And he told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.’”

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Although it might not seem like it at first, there is definitely much “good news” in today’s Gospel. Jesus makes it clear that we cannot compare ourselves with others, as each of us sins and each of us falls short of who we are called to be. It is not helpful, then, to try to distinguish levels of sinfulness.

► **Why do you think Jesus points this out to his followers?**

Jesus continues presenting this idea of a compassionate, loving God through the parable of the fig tree. In this story, patience outweighs practicality. Does it make sense that the land owner would want to uproot a barren tree that probably looks rather dead and is certainly draining other resources? Of course! But the gardener reminds us that our lives as Christians are about more than practicality.

► **What do you think it means to say that the Christian life is about more than practicality?**

► **What are some characteristics of the Christian life? How would you describe it to someone?**

One characteristic of the Christian life is hope, and we see this in today’s Gospel reading. Notice that we don’t know what happens to the fig tree. While the gardener pleads with the landowner and promises to cultivate the plant, we do not know for certain if the owner agrees to the plan or if the tree responds to the tending. We do know, however, that there is hope for the future of the tree. Likewise, there is hope for us, even when the future is unknown or uncertain, or when we have sinned.

► **Where do you find hope?**

► **What helps you to live out this hope in your daily life?**

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century Cistercian monk, spoke of the need for patient endurance while growing in life in Christ. Lent is a great opportunity to remember this image of endurance and today’s Gospel highlights the significance of patience in light of Christian hope. St. Bernard reminds us that there is nothing that we cannot overcome through Christ if we are willing to unite our lives with his.

► **What does it mean for you to unite your life with Jesus?**

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 150.*

**God does not compare. Rather, God loves each of us individually for our unique gifts and talents.**

**Even when we make sinful choices, God loves us more than anything we do or fail to do.**

**We need to intentionally take time to cultivate our faith and hope.**

# Act on the Word

## Letters to the Elect

*For this activity, you will need card making materials such as markers, colored pencils, and blank paper. You will also need envelopes and pens or pencils.*

Lent is a time of final preparation for those people who are going to be baptized at the Easter Vigil and enter into the Body of Christ and the community of faith. These people are called the “elect.” Even if your parish does not have any elect celebrating the sacraments of initiation this Easter, it is important to remember that the process of initiation involves *all* people of faith. As people who are already baptized into Christ, we are called to share God’s love with others and encourage their growth in Christ.

Have the teens reflect on their understanding of Christian hope and God’s love. Then, give them materials to make greeting cards or write letters to the elect. In both cases, the young people should share with the elect their reflections on their hope in God’s love. Let the elect know that they are welcomed into this community of faith.

If you do not have any elect in your parish, contact a neighboring parish that has elect who are preparing for initiation. Share these letters with them. Remember, we are one body in Christ and it is important that we support each other, especially our newest members of the community!

## Closing Prayer

*God of every good grace,  
direct our hearts and minds to your service.  
Help us to fulfill your commands  
and bring others to know of your mercy  
until we are united in the halls of heaven.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends. If your parish will be celebrating the second scrutiny with those preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil, the Year A readings may be used. The handout and session for the Year A readings are found in the appendix of this book on pages 243–246.*