

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

Third Sunday of Lent

March 23, 2025



REFLECTION

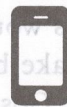
In the past few years, a popular interview has resurfaced and was reposted on social media. In it, the interviewee said that if a plant isn't growing, we don't blame the plant. Instead, we should look at the plant's environment and see if it needs more light, more nutrients in the soil, or more care so that it can do what it is supposed to do.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable where a fig tree hasn't produced figs for three years and the owner wanted to cut it down. The gardener argued that more time should be given to care for the tree properly so that it might bear fruit. In a year's time, the owner could check on its progress.

The question for you is, does your physical and social environment bring you closer or farther away from God's call for you? Are the reasons why you are struggling spiritually because you don't have enough of what you need to grow? Do you need more spiritual nutrients to help you bear the fruits of the Spirit? Are the people who surround you encouraging you and helping you to live a life of virtue? Perhaps your tree needs a little more care this Lent.

ACTION

Take some time to reflect on your physical and social environment. Make a list of some of the material things you have and the relationships you invest time in. Then write how each item or relationship leads you to or away from a life of virtue and a relationship with Christ. For those things or relationships that lead you away from Jesus, make a few plans that you can put into action this week for how you might change them so that they bear good fruit for God.



Check out these tips for creating a good prayer space:
<https://ltp.org/s/prayer-space>

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are some areas in your spiritual life that need more care and support? Who or what can support you?
- ❖ What are some areas in your life that need to be pruned or trimmed so that you can continue growing into the person God has made you to be?



March 23, 2025

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #30C

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

Psalms 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

Sometimes, when we hear of something bad happening to people we know or on the news, we may think that they deserved it because they made bad choices. We develop a sort of "holier than thou" attitude that makes us feel that those things would never happen to us because we don't make bad choices. Similarly, we see the crowd in the Gospel today equating people's suffering or death with sinfulness. Jesus' response calls us to recognize that these bad things can happen to any of us, for we are all sinners and we fall short of whom God wants us to be. Suffering and death is not a punishment from God for our personal sins. Instead, it is a consequence of original sin and the fact that we live in a fallen world. But there is hope! Jesus calls us today to repent and put our faith and trust in God.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus calls on us to change our hearts and our lives.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

March 24 is the memorial for St. Oscar Romero of El Salvador. As an archbishop, Romero spoke out against the injustices and violence that were terrorizing the Salvadoran people due to conflict between the military government and insurgents. He advocated for the poor and marginalized, many of whom were victims of violence. He was martyred during Mass for speaking out against the government. Pope Francis canonized him in 2018. His life

continues to inspire those who work for social justice and peace.

Church Teaching Connection

"In effect, to become reconciled with God presupposes and includes detaching oneself consciously and with determination from the sin into which one has fallen. It presupposes and includes, therefore, doing penance in the fullest sense of the term: repenting, showing this repentance, adopting a real attitude of repentance- which is the attitude of the person who starts out on the road of return to the Father. This is a general law and one which each individual must follow in his or her particular situation. For it is not possible to deal with sin and conversion only in abstract terms" (Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 13).

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:

The Gospel today begins with the deaths of some Galileans at the hand of Pilate. In several instances in the Gospels, the crowds present an understanding that sometimes they equated death or illness with sinfulness. We see this in today's passage, with the crowd believing that those who died were more sinful than they were. Jesus rejected that understanding and told them that those who died were no more sinful than they were. He even stated that a fatal accident or a natural disaster should not be interpreted as punishment for sin.

► What is your understanding of sin?

Jesus tells the crowd that suffering is due to their unrepentance. He calls on them to repent or suffer the same fate as the Galileans. Ultimately, our

unrepentance, that is, our not choosing to follow God, will lead to us death, forever separated from God.

Our understanding of repentance sometimes just focuses on confessing our sins. But that is just one part of repentance. Repentance includes recognizing our sins, asking for forgiveness, and showing our regret or remorse for the things we have done wrong. These steps lead us to a change of heart. They call for us to be converted, to turn our heart and life toward God. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus pairs repentance with belief in the Gospel (Mark 1:15). Repentance is a conversion from a sinful life apart from God to a life that is faithful and focused solely on God. Repentance leads us to put our trust and care into God's hands so that we can overcome whatever it is that is keeping us from him.

► What prevents you from being close to God? What are some things you can do to focus your heart on God?

The process of repentance is not “one and done.” It is an ongoing experience that is part of our Christian life. We must always keep turning away from sin and turning toward God. The parable of the barren fig tree in the second half of today's Gospel points to this. We hear about a practical landowner and a patient and hopeful gardener. When told to cut down the tree by the landowner, the gardener asks for another chance, promising to nourish and tend to the tree so that it may yet bear fruit.

God always gives us another chance. He supplies us with the grace we need to repent and return to him. But it is not always easy for us. Sometimes when we try something new, we aren't able to master it for a long time. Think about learning to play an instrument, or mastering some other skill. It might take years before we are proficient at it, and even longer before we are considered a master of it, if ever. It takes lots of practicing, years of learning, and an enormous amount of effort. Just because we aren't producing masterpieces after a year of study, a true teacher wouldn't give up on us, nor should we give up on ourselves. Jesus, the patient gardener and teacher, does not give up on us. He works gently and thoroughly until we are producing the fruits of repentance.

God's plan for all of his children is that they bear good fruit. If we allow Christ to tend to us—prune us, cultivate us, and fertilize us—we can grow into a fruitful tree, a fruitful disciple.

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 162.

We are all sinful people in need of repentance.

Conversion of our hearts and turning toward God are necessary for true repentance.

God gives us time to grow into the person he calls us to be, and he helps us along the way.

Act on the Word

Guess the Fruits

For this activity, you will need copies of a list of fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit (enough for each young person), paper, journals, and pens.

Share with the teens that when we repent and allow ourselves to be turned toward God by the gentle hand of Jesus our gardener, we bear good fruit. This good fruit is seen in our actions and words that reflect our faith, and they help people turn toward God. The Church teaches that there are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that help us to bear these fruits. They are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are given to us by the Spirit through our sacramental participation and they communicate God's grace to us. They work within us to help us grow in holiness and live as Jesus' disciples.

Divide the teens into four small groups. Have the groups spread out in the room so that they are

not close to one another. Assign each group three fruits of the Holy Spirit and two gifts of the Holy Spirit (one group will have only one gift of the Holy Spirit). Do not let the groups know what was assigned to the other groups. Have the groups spend some time discussing and taking notes on what these fruits and gifts look like when they are lived out in their daily lives. Then have each group create a short skit in which the characters put these into practice. The skits will be presented to the large group and the audience must guess which fruits and gifts the group was depicting in its skit.

After the groups have all presented their skits, give the teens some time to journal about the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Some writing prompts include reflecting on which fruits the young people feel are the easiest and hardest to cultivate, how they are using the gifts of the Spirit in their lives already, and how they can use the gifts of the Spirit to bring about the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their actions.

Closing Prayer

God,
you have given us many gifts.
Help us to attend to them
and grow them with care,
that we may bear the fruit
of the kingdom of God.
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. 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 251-254.