

WORDS FROM FR. RICHARD

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

The first two Sundays of the Lenten season presented to us the fullness of the person of Christ, The first Sunday of Lent was a reminder that even Jesus, himself, was tempted but never gave into these temptations. In the human Christ, we see the possibilities of overcoming evil if we, like Christ, are faithful to the call of our God. In the second week of Lent, we are given the story of Transfiguration in which the fullness of Christ's divinity is revealed. What is so significant about that revelation is that it takes place in the course of daily life. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John and reveals to them the presence of His divinity among them. This same revelation is present to us in the course of our lives through the sacraments of the Church and the blessed moments of human interaction. When we are there for one another and promoting good the complete Christ is present and evil is overcome.

It is this God of goodness who dominates the readings for this Third Sunday of Lent. The first reading is from the Book of Exodus, which is given to describe the flight of the people from Egypt. The great gift of this book is the knowledge and reminder that God is intimately involved in the lives of His chosen people. So often we have a tendency to depict God as solemn and removed from our sight. Yahweh or "I am who am" makes it very clear to Moses that He has been with the people since the time of Abraham and that He fully intends to remain with the people. Moses allows us to see that God is always the initiator of a relationship with each one of us. We respond to God's call but in doing so we enact a relationship and it is this relationship that defines the purpose of our God. God comes to save us and we must accept or reject that election. God patiently waits for us to call out His name in response to His calling out our name first. Yahweh is with us, walks with us, talks to us, holds us up throughout our lives, and has every intention of saving us. What we need to do is call upon His holy name.

Paul speaks once again to the community at Corinth. This is a reading of warning and encouragement reminding us of what we are capable of achieving as well as a warning against the pitfalls which we must avoid in our faith. The early Church experienced a constant problem and that was the fact that after Baptism the new Christians had a tendency to grow complacent and neutral. We remember that at that time they were still expecting Christ to return at any moment. As a result the Christian community would often do nothing to avoid sin rather than reaching out and living and acting in a Christian manner. In addition, they would sometimes return to their old pagan ways and mindsets. Paul reminds them of the sins of the Jewish people after the Exodus from Egypt when they stopped practicing their faith and gave in to the pagan ways of the Egyptians. Paul tells us that just as the journey through the Red Sea was a new beginning so is baptism in Christ. However, what we often forget is that it is only a beginning and that it must be practiced with diligence every day of our lives. Lent gives us an opportunity to review our lives and ask God to strengthen those areas where we have failed.

The gospel carries several thoughtful reminders. The first reminder is that we are all equal in the eyes of God. The ancient understanding (and at times the modern one as well) was that tragedies would befall those who were more sinful. The first thing Jesus does is to cancel that understanding and remind those present that the Galileans were no more guilty of grievous sin than anyone else. Earthquakes, tornadoes, accidents, illnesses happen in every day in life. Those who are victims of these phenomena are no more guilty than we ourselves, in fact our theology tells us that when someone is ill they may be called upon to suffer for the sins of the many; namely, us. Jesus impresses upon us that we are all responsible for sin in the world. With that fact understood, what Jesus is most concerned about is that we take constructive action to give up those sins and change our lives. This He calls repentance. Repentance is the call to rethink our lives and change them for the better. This action Jesus demands. We are a sinful people but we must repent in order to be acceptable to God. Together we must use this Lenten season to take our share of responsibility for the sin in our world and actively do something about it by changing our lives. Secondly, Jesus tells us of the infinite patience of the God of Abraham and Moses. Just as God remained with the people of the Old Testament, God also remains with us in His Son, Jesus Christ. Just like the fig tree, God offers us every opportunity to bear fruit This means that the process of repentance is more than just seeking God's forgiveness but it also entails an honest effort to change our lives and act differently toward one another. This is the true action of Lent so that on Easter we may rise with Christ to a new life.

This past week we had our yearly Lenten Parish Mission given by Fr. Bob Lombardo. From all reports it was an outstanding spiritual experience. The crowds each night gave witness to our parishioners' desire to use this opportunity to prepare for Easter. Thank you, Fr. Lombardo. Our parish reconciliation service this year will take place on Tuesday evening, March 23, at 7:00 p.m. Please plan on attending. We will also hear confessions on Saturday afternoon, March 27, from 12:30 p.m. until all are heard. The liturgical regulation is that all confessions must be completed by Wednesday evening of Holy Week.

This weekend is also the celebration of our annual Green and Gold banquet. This is always a spectacular event and many of our school parents put in countless hours of preparation for this night. This is the evening when the various auctions and fund-a-need projects bring in much needed funds for the operation of our school. Many thanks to all who have worked so hard all year getting ready for the event.

May God bless you and strengthen you and your families during this holy season.

Msgr. Richard Zborowski
March 7, 2010