

3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 3:1-8a,13-15
Ps 103:1-4, 6-8,11
1 Cor 10:1-6,10-12
Luke 13:1-9

Monday March 25
Annunciation of the Lord
Isaiah 7:10-14;8:10
Ps 40:7-11
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38

Tuesday March 26
Daniel 3:25,34-43
Ps 25:4-9
Matthew 18:21-35

Wednesday March 27
Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9
Ps 147:12-13,15-16,19-20
Matthew 5:17-19

Thursday March 28
Jeremiah 7:23-28
Ps 95:1-2,6-9
Luke 11:14-23

Friday March 29
Hosea 14:2-10
Ps 81:6-11,14,17
Mark 12:28-34

Saturday March 30
Hosea 6:1-6
Ps 51:3-4,18-21
Luke 18:9-14

How do you feel when someone who's hurtful or morally corrupt gets hit with a hardship that makes them suffer? We rejoice because justice has been meted out.

Jesus says we cannot truthfully say that someone is a "greater sinner", even if that person is doing more damage, is more unChristian, or is blatantly an evil-doer.

Every person has been created in the image of God, even the worst ones. Those who display an opposite image are nonetheless loved by Christ, who died for them. It's a tragedy that they do not live as the person God created them to be. But it will be an even worse tragedy if no one invites them to turn their lives over to Christ.

Evil-doers are children of God living in ignorance of their true identity. They are victims of evil and were seduced into

believing that it's the best way to live. They don't understand that they can be healed by the Sinless One who conquered evil for their redemption. We should feel sorry for them -- this is the gift of mercy. We should mourn with Jesus for the tragedy that continues within their souls -- this is the most precious gift of mercy.

When we don't care enough to grieve over a person's inner destruction, we are sinning. We are disregarding what Jesus did for them on the cross. We are damaging our own souls.



Those who sinned against you are like the fig tree in Jesus' parable. If you have access to them, he wants you to till their soil. He wants you to fertilize their souls with love and with the truth of the

Gospel as taught by your actions and, when they're ready, by your words.

Notice that Jesus doesn't want us to keep a diseased, disintegrating tree in the garden forever. After we have done everything possible, if the evil-doer refuses to change, the best care we can give to the garden is to cut down the tree. This means walking away or calling in the authorities. This, too, is loving. When fertilizer won't produce good fruits, a fallen tree becomes mulch and enriches the ground for a new beginning.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Who has been so hurtful that you wish God would punish them?
2. Can you feel sorry for them? Can you pray for God to do good for them? In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, ask for God's help in feeling more concerned about them. In this, you'll find freedom from the anger that has been holding you captive.
3. What steps can be taken to fertilize the lives of the problematic people of your parish or family?
4. How do you know when it's time to continue trying and when it's time to chop the tree down?