

3rd Sunday of Lent, Year C

GOSPEL

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Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."

(Luke 13:1-9)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The pool of Siloam was a reservoir that lay within the city walls of ancient Jerusalem. During the reign of King Hezekiah, an extraordinary tunnel was dug through bedrock to connect it to the spring of Gihon outside the city walls so that the city would have an ample water supply in times of siege.
- We have no evidence outside the biblical text of the incident referred to here where Pilate 'mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifice,' but such an act is not out of character. Pilate had a reputation for being a brutal military leader.
- At the time in which Jesus lived, suffering was often considered to be a punishment from God for sin committed.

EXPLORING THE WORD

This gospel is really about the loving care and patience of God. It was commonly believed that a loving God could not be responsible for terrible calamities that befell people, but that these events must somehow be a result of their own sinfulness. Jesus takes the opportunity to say that the recent deaths of both Galileans and inhabitants of Jerusalem did not mean that they were any more sinful than others. They were no more deserving of death than anyone else. Indeed, we must not look to the sinfulness of others but to our own need for repentance.

The parable of the owner of the vineyard tells of God's infinite patience in dealing with the sinfulness of humans. Despite our failings, God will graciously allow us time to produce our best fruit. The theme of this gospel—God's forgiveness and care—will be taken up in the gospels of the next two weeks.

- Lent is a special time of preparation, particularly for the elect. In what ways can you cultivate your own garden of faith in this special time?
- Are there still areas of your life that are yet to produce their best fruit?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How 'fruitful' has your life been? What 'fruit' have you borne?
- Do you need a second chance to bear good fruit?
- In what ways can you make it even more fruitful?
- Have you ever had an experience of needing to nurture someone or something for a long period before they 'produced fruit'? Were there failures along the way? What was it that eventually brought about the growth? Share your reflections.
- Attend carefully this week to cultivating your own relationship with God. Try to bring out the best in someone else as well.
- Use this section of today's psalm as your prayer this week:

*The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
For as the heavens are above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him.*

