

## THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 24, 2019

### MASS READINGS:

MONDAY: IS 7:10-14, 8:10, HEB 10:4-10, LK 1:26-

38

TUESDAY: DN 3:25, 34-43, MT 18:21-35

WEDNESDAY: DT 4:1, 5-9, MT 5:17-18

THURSDAY: JER 7:23-28, LK 11:14-23

FRIDAY: HOS 14:2-10, MK 12:28-34

SATURDAY: HOS 6:1-6, LK 18:9-14

**NEXT SUNDAY: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT –  
JOS 5:9A, 10-12, 2 COR 5:17-21, LK 15:1-3, 11-32**

### MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: THEA FARRELL

TUESDAY: DOLORES CAVANAUGH

WEDNESDAY: CHARLES HILL

THURSDAY: MARY LESTER

FRIDAY: POOR SOULS

VIGIL: THEA FARRELL

7:30: JASON ANDERSON

10:00: JOHN LIBBERS

NOON: FOR THE PARISH

### MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Shirley Wagner. Bob Bennett. (Edna Holbrook & Joe Delaney). (Jack Biggs & Jack Hurst). Ann Hubertz. (Joseph & Louise Albregts). Carl & Scott Waclawik. Sharon Myers.

*But I tell you, if you do not repent,  
you will all perish as they did!"*

Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on your point of view, the above is what a good number of people think of when they think of religion, especially Christianity, i.e. seeming threats of eternal damnation. Of course, it's fairly easy to make this indictment, first so many people adopt this attitude when it comes to others eternal salvation and second, it might just work in getting people to do something. Neither of these are truly beneficial nor do they, even in the remotest sense represent Christianity. First read the entire gospel for this Sunday and see what is happening. The apparent question seems to arise regarding the fate of those caught in disasters of recent memory. Anyone having read the book or seen the moving *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* can appreciate this. Regarding each incident brought up Jesus answers with the same formula noted above. In essence it really doesn't answer the question since, in short, there isn't one, at least not one this side of the Kingdom. Instead Jesus lays out what he means by way of a parable about a fig tree, which is supposed to deliver fruit but doesn't. In short repentance here means wake up to who and what you are and what you are supposed to be doing and you will be delivered from the great calamity. The only way this can come about of course, is if we turn to the one who made us and through whom we were made and, with the aid of the Holy Spirit then, become what we were meant to be, bearers of the fruit of good works of mercy and compassion. Regardless of coming up with scenarios of gloom and doom and trying to seek insights into them as if "decoding fate" is our latest obsession we simply note that we were made in the image and likeness of God and he sent his Son to show us more closely what this image looks like so that, with the aid and guidance of his Spirit we may so imitate as to reflect that divine presence here on earth. Sounds simple enough but that is probably part of the problem. It implies that we are to do some soul searching, finding ourselves lacking in important areas we are to repent of this and seek the "better way". It's a whole lot easier to level threats of damnation and condemnation on folks than to set about the business of placing ourselves in the hands of our loving Father, which is way the above passage is so isolated as to be used against the Faith. It doesn't help that so called followers of the Faith also give this impression. Lent then invites us to look and see where we need to polish off that image of the Divine, to repent of those things which have tarnished it and to adopt a plan of prayer, fasting and works of mercy whereby we can then be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

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### *Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy.*

**Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy.** These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, “rich in mercy” (*Eph 2:4*), after having revealed his name to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (*Ex 34:6*), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the “fullness of time” (*Gal 4:4*), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. *Jn 14:9*). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person<sup>[1]</sup> reveals the mercy of God.

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children”.<sup>[2]</sup> Blessed Paul VI spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council: “We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for individuals themselves there was only admonition, respect and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies; instead of direful predictions, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world's values were not only respected but honoured, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed... Another point we must stress is this: all this rich teaching is channelled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need”.<sup>[3]</sup>

With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.

It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way”.<sup>[5]</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas' words show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: “O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness ...”<sup>[6]</sup> Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.



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“Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

For his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God’s revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God’s history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually “for his mercy endures forever,” as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm – the “Great Hallel,” as it is called – in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, “when they had sung a hymn” (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: “for his mercy endures forever.”

With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus’ entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion. (Excerpt from *Misericordiae Vultus* of Pope Francis...for more go to...<https://w2.vatican.va/>)

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### Repentance - Door of Mercy

Do you know that man has been found guilty of sin by a Holy God, and sentenced to death? If he is to escape this eternal death and be eternally saved, he must receive God's mercy. Mercy in this respect is God withholding from man the penalty which he deserves. But God does not bestow His mercy on people without condition, even though salvation is free, without price, and cannot be earned. The condition upon which God grants mercy is repentance.

John the Baptist came preaching the Word of God and his message was simple and powerful, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Jesus, the Son of God, began His ministry with the same message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Repentance is a requisite of salvation, as Peter the apostle said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Through repentance, the door of mercy is opened and salvation obtained.

#### All Have Sinned

In our world there are multitudes of people, and in many ways we are different one from another. But this message we all share: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And listen further, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). God spoke through His Prophet Isaiah and said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Do you notice the central thought of these scriptures? "All have strayed." "None righteous." "All have sinned." Wouldn't this also include you? Your soul, your life belongs to God. The man or woman, who does not recognize God as the master of his life lives in disobedience and sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

#### Sin Separates

Your sins have separated you from God. You feel a longing inside that you can't explain. You may feel forsaken and that God doesn't hear. The reason is pointed out by God, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities [sins] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Again, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). As you think of your life and your sins, think also about God. God is without sin, therefore He is holy, righteous and just. God says sin must be judged: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). There is a great gulf between you and God. Unless you find the way which spans that gulf between a holy God and sinful man, you shall die an eternal death! (Luke 16:26) But listen, there is a way – there is hope for you!

#### Jesus Opens the Door

While it is true God has decreed a judgment of death upon sin, He is also a God of love. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). God loves you even if you are living in sin. His love has made a way for you to be saved. (John 3:16) God will carry out His judgment on sin, and if this justice would be meted out to man, he would instantly die. Therefore God, not willing that any should perish, sent His son Jesus to take the penalty of our sins that we may live. The Bible says: "Behold ... the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). The goodness of God desires to save man but His judgment demands sentence.

Taken from: <http://www.churchofgodinchristmennonite.net/en/content/repentance-door-mercy>

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**What does a parable about an unproductive fig tree have to do with how you're going about your life?  
The answer is—quite a bit!**

### Change and produce

Repentance is not a fashionable word today. You might even need to go to a dictionary to look up the meaning. Its basic meaning is *to change*. It means to stop doing something that's not productive or taking you in a wrong direction. It means to stop going in one direction of life, a direction that can be self-destructive, and to turn around and go another—in a way that's productive and even godly.

Biblically, and as Christ meant it here, it means *to stop breaking the law of God and begin to obey God's law*. Christ meant it in the same way He used it when first preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as quoted in Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” It means that through this announcement a new order of life is at hand and we need to obtain a mind-set that fits. It means to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3: Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Which leads us back to the parable.

An unproductive fig tree in a vineyard is pretty much useless—unless you're like Nathaniel and want to use it only for shade (John 1: Nathaniel said to him, From where know you me? Jesus answered and said to him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.

And if it hasn't produced fruit for three years in a row, a remedy needs to be applied. It isn't that the tree is dead and incapable of producing. The tree hasn't had the proper care and feeding and is just there, marking time. It's like a lot of people—alive and breathing, but not really going anywhere.

How about you? Do you understand your life? Can you make sense out of this confusing, sometimes disorderly and uneven existence? Do you know the purpose for your life and what it can become? Forget for a moment the bigger question of “the meaning of life” and just focus on you. What is the purpose for you drawing breath, eating food and taking up space on this planet?

If you don't know, or if your answer is pretty weak and unsure, then just consider for a brief moment that this unproductive fig tree could be a symbol of your life. You are alive. You have a “place.” But are you producing fruit? Are you living as part of a bigger, overarching purpose?

You can find the answers to these questions. And they can make a positive difference in your life. And God wants you to find the answer!

### Extending time to turn things around

The vineyard owner's solution to this unproductive fig tree was blunt: “Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?” (Luke 13: Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why encumbers it the ground?

This is a hard solution, and a final one. It shows us a truth about God. God is full of mercy and compassion. He is patient and loving. But God is also a God of judgment, and Christ is warning here that a time of final judgment will come on a life—especially a life that has had opportunity, warning and the benefit of the doubt. When linked to the earlier statement “unless you repent,” we learn that there's a way to avoid being “cut down” and considered of no value.

Don't be discouraged! The remainder of the parable shows us the way out!

The keeper of the vineyard answers the owner: “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down” (Luke 13:8- And he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.

The keeper asks for one more year in which to work with the tree—to turn it around and make it useful and productive. There is hope and every expectation that the wise and capable attention of the keeper will produce a new burst of productivity so that the next harvest will see fruit on the tree. That is the key thought here.

We can see that God is in a dual role here as both keeper and owner of the vineyard. This shows us that God both owns us and gives us room to grow spiritually, but He also expects us to produce “fruit”—the product of a life of good works of righteousness.

Galatians 5:22-23 the kind of fruit God wants to see produced in our lives: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” The apostle Paul explains here that these qualities are the fruit of God's Spirit. They are what can be produced by God through our lives when we repent and believe the gospel, surrender ourselves to Him and allow our lives to be led by His Holy Spirit.

This parable of a barren fig tree is meant to teach us a vital truth. Repentance is necessary, and it is possible with God's help. He is patient and grants us time to change and bear fruit. Yet at the same time, none of us knows how much time we have left—so we'd better get moving!

God in His judgment is always just, and only He understands the depth of your life. That He is aware and inspecting His “vineyard” to know the condition of each of His trees is a comfort. His desire is that none perish (2 Peter 3: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. but that all produce abundant fruit and inherit eternal life!

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# Announcements and Upcoming Events



ST. BONIFACE  
CEMETERY

## CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES: Mission statement

Catholic Relief Services carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. We are motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to cherish, preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching as we act to:

**PROMOTE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies; and,  
**SERVE CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES** as they live their faith in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world.

As part of the universal mission of the Catholic Church, we work with local, national and international Catholic institutions and structures, as well as other organizations, to assist people on the basis of need, not creed, race or nationality.

We put our faith into action to help the world's poorest create lasting change.  
Our annual second collection will be taken on the Weekend of March 30/31.

**We have in the Bell Tower college scholarship opportunities.** Two of the scholarships are sponsored through the Diocese-of-Lafayette and specifically for graduating seniors. The third scholarship is sponsored through the Northcentral Indiana Hispanic Scholarship Fund and can also be used for Hispanic students currently enrolled at an accredited college. Plenty of details can be found in the attachments. Please note that applications are due to the Office of Catholic Schools no later than April 18, 2019 for all scholarships. Recipients will announced in early May.

Scholarship information will be sent to *The Catholic Moment* and will be available on the Office of Catholic Schools website. <https://education.dol-in.org/>. If you could also add the announcement to your parish bulletin, we would appreciate it. If you or one of your students have any questions about the scholarship requirements, please email or call us at the Office of Catholic Schools. See Father after Mass for forms.



### A Lenten Journey To Jesus Through Mary

**WHAT:** You are invited to deepen and live any consecration you have made to Mary through the Covenant of Love formation. Are you longing for a Home Shrine (Domestic Church)? Come and see!

**WHEN: Wednesdays 5:15 to 6:30 pm**

**DATES: March 20 - May 1 (7 weeks)**

**WHERE: St Thomas Aquinas Church, Room 3** which is downstairs. Free parking is available in the Marsteller street lot adjacent to St. Tom's.

**Our Blessed Mother invites you!**

For more information contact Janine Reklaitis ([irek27@gmail.com](mailto:irek27@gmail.com)) (765) 463-1412 or Rosemary Speaker ([rspeaker@lion-lamb.com](mailto:rspeaker@lion-lamb.com)) (765) 463-7510

## DEANERY LENTEN PENANCE SERVICES

APRIL 1-ST THOMAS AQUINAS, WEST LAFAYETTE

APRIL 2-BLESSED SACRAMENT, WEST LAFAYETTE  
(6PM)

APRIL 10-ST. LAWRENCE

(ALL TIMES 7PM UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)

**SUNDAY OFFERING: \$6872**

**BREAKFAST: \$547** (SERRA CLUB)

**"FIND OUT HOW MUCH GOD HAS GIVEN YOU, AND FROM IT TAKE WHAT YOU NEED; THE REMAINDER IS NEEDED BY OTHERS"**

ST. AUGUSTINE