

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 23, 2025

Gospel: (Luke 13: 1-9)

Jesus said, "Those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of 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 then 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 gardner, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' The gardner 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.'"

Reflection:

The parable of the non-fruit-bearing fig tree describes the fate of those who do not repent. Even though God gives us everything we need for our journey toward salvation, we ourselves need to "cultivate and fertilize" our spiritual lives. We "grumble" our way through life—we judge others, fail to live up to our baptismal commitments, do not heed all the warnings given us. Jesus is quite clear in his message: "bear fruit or be "cut down." The "fertilizer" is the charity, fasting, and prayer of our Christian penance. Repentance is "cultivating" the soil so we can bear fruit. Repentance is changing one's mind, letting go of the narrowness of our own perception of how life should be and embracing the expansiveness of God's plan for salvation. Repentance is really conversion. And God waits everyday of our lives for us to bear fruit. (Living Liturgy, p.78)

Vincentian Meditation:

Conversion for us as followers of Vincent and Frederic will mean allowing Jesus and the poor to invade the citadels of our minds and of our hearts. Our minds and hearts are like fortresses. We live within them, but are reluctant to admit Jesus and his poor into the very center of them. We will allow Jesus in just so far, but we often by our action or inaction show him that we don't wish Him to take us over completely. He is continually asking us to surrender to him. He is asking us continually to let go, and we insist on holding on. Conversion or repentance is about surrender. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.698)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What conversion do you need, so that you can "bear fruit?"

Closing Prayer:

The discipline of Lent calls us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus,
-may your love guide us to conversion.

Lord, you came to give sight to the blind,
-open our eyes to see beyond our own selfishness.

Lord, you came to bring good news to the poor,
-may our actions bring hope to those we serve.

Lord, give us the grace to "fertilize and cultivate" our spiritual life,
-so that we may bear fruit.

Amen

