

READING I *Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15*

Shorter: Exodus 1-3, 7-8, 12-17

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned."

When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

Moses said to God, "But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

"This is my name forever; / thus am I to be remembered through all generations."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11 (8a)

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits. R.

He pardons all your iniquities,
he heals all your ills,
He redeems your life from destruction,
he crowns you with kindness
and compassion. R.

The LORD secures justice
and the rights of all the oppressed.
He has made known his ways to Moses,
and his deeds to the children of Israel. R.

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so surpassing is his kindness toward those
who fear him. R.

READING II *1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12*

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert.

These things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, as they did. Do not grumble as some of them did, and suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.

GOSPEL *Luke 13:1–9*

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at 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 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 gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He 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.’”

Practice of Hope

The parable of the patient gardener is a reminder of our potential for growth. ♦ Now at the midpoint of our Lenten journey, reflect on your attentiveness to your Lenten practices and make any necessary adjustments. ♦ Consider Jesus’ words about repentance today. What sin hinders you from freely living and sharing your faith? ♦ The Church commemorates the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord on March 25. God announces the Good News in the most unexpected places and through the most unexpected messengers. This week attend to the messengers that God sends to inspire, encourage, and challenge you.

Download more questions and activities for families, Christian initiation groups, and other adult groups at <https://www.ltp.org/dlw>.

Scripture Insights

Repentance, the theme of this Sunday’s Gospel reading, can be a challenging topic. Penitential writings of the past often made extravagant claims of sinfulness that resonate with few people today. In chapter 21 of Thomas à Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*, the author states, “It is a wonder that any who consider and meditate on their exiled state and the many dangers to their souls can ever be perfectly happy in this life. Lighthearted and heedless of our defects, we do not feel the real sorrows of our souls, but often indulge in empty laughter when we have good reason to weep.” Although this type of language was influential at various times in history, many people today find in it an unhealthy repression and obsession with sin.

Jesus preached repentance, however, so today’s disciples must have some understanding of the idea. The biblical language of repentance is helpful. In Hebrew, words for “repentance” often mean *turn* or *turn away*. In Greek, the most common word is *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind/heart.” Jesus draws on both ideas, encouraging his disciples to turn from their current life through an interior change.

In Scripture, sometimes the “turning” is literal. In the Hebrew text of the first reading, many translations have Moses saying to himself, “Let me turn aside and see this great sight . . .” Paying attention to God’s nearby presence can inspire significant transformation. Turning the body alone is not always enough; repentance requires interior renewal. As St. Paul notes in the second reading, one can witness great miracles and not experience a change of heart.

The parable of the fig tree recognizes that interior renewal is a slow process. The gardener proposes a slow process of strengthening the life of the tree. Just so, our interior transformation grows slowly through fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. These are Jesus’ gardening techniques that give life in every age to his disciples.

- ♦ How can you respond to Jesus’ call to repentance?
- ♦ How can you attend to God’s nearby presence?
- ♦ How can you let Christ transform your heart?