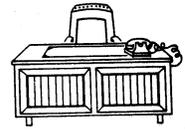


3rd Sunday of Lent

March 24, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Reflection:

The first reading was about the call of Moses as God's emissary for the deliverance of the Israelites from the land of oppression. Moses' curiosity about the burning bush quickly turned into an experience of mystery and revelation. God asked Moses to stop and remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Do we stop to show respect in God's presence?

In both the Old and New Testaments, it was common to encounter God on a mountain. Moses encountered God in the burning bush on Mount Horeb when he received his mission and on Mount Sinai when he received the Ten Commandments. Elijah encountered God on Mount Carmel where he defeated the 450 prophets of Baal. Jesus' transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor. Mountains were significant in the Scriptures based on the worldview that the higher you go the closer you are to heaven.

One of the most significant parts of Moses' encounter with God in the first reading was God's revelation of his name, I AM. It is another way of saying that God's name is mysterious and eternal. In the new dispensation, Jesus revealed God to us as Father without undermining the mystery of God. As God called Moses to liberate the Israelites from bondage, likewise God calls us to liberate the world from poverty, disease, and injustice. Like Moses, we need to know when we are standing on holy ground.

The second reading compares and contrasts the old and new dispensations. It reminds us that our baptismal relationship with Jesus parallels Israel's baptismal relationship with Moses. Just as they ate the spiritual food (manna) and drank spiritual drink (water from the rock), we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. However, not all who participated in the divine nourishment at the time of Moses survived. Some lost their lives in the wilderness as a lesson to future generations. Similarly, receiving the Eucharist may not be sufficient for salvation, unless we become what we eat.

Whereas coming to Mass and receiving the Eucharist are noble spiritual practices, they do not guarantee salvation. In other words, we need to take seriously the Lenten invitation to conversion. We need to be sincere about our commitment to love God and neighbor. The stark warning for the Corinthians serves as a rude awakening against presumptuousness. The reading concludes with this statement, "Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall."

St. Paul's warning seems to echo Jesus' warning in the gospel. When he received the news of Pilate's horrendous act of mingling the blood of some Galileans with the blood of animals for sacrifice to the Roman gods, Jesus warned that those who fail to repent would perish like those unfortunate Galileans. He similarly cited the news of the eighteen people killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them. He challenged the popular belief that bad things only happen to bad people and stated that those unfortunate victims were not the worst sinners of the time.

The parable that followed underscores God's patience with sinners. He gives everyone opportunities to repent and bear good fruit. Sacraments are the fertilizers that nourish and enable us to be fruitful. In Lent, it is especially the case with the sacraments of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. The parable highlights the unfortunate reality that those who fail to bear fruit would be cut down. It is also comforting to know that Jesus is able to plead on our behalf and buy us enough time to turn our fortunes around. As we pray for God's patience with us, we also ought to show patience with people in our lives who seem to be wasting our time and resources.

Have a great week! Fr. Romanus