

**SUNDAY March 3, 2018**

**Lent 3**

## **"Giving It Up: Old Wineskins"**

### **First Reading ~ *Luke 5:27-38***

When Jesus went out after this, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said, and Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

Levi gave a big reception at his house for Jesus, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others at dinner with them. The Pharisees and the religious scholars complained to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" Jesus answered them, "It's not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are not well. I have come to call not the virtuous, but sinners to repentance."

They then said to him, John (the Baptizer's) disciples fast frequently and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees do the same. But yours eat and drink."

Jesus replied, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridal party is still with them? The day will come when the bridal party will be taken from them; then they'll fast."

Jesus then told them this parable: "People never tear a piece from a new garment and sew it on an old one. If they do, not only will they have torn the new garment, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. And people never put new wine in an old wineskin. If they do, the new wine will expand and burst the skin; the wine will spill out and the skin will be ruined. No, the new wine must be put in fresh wineskins."

### **Second Reading ~ *from Father Richard Rohr in "Evolution: All Things Change and Grow"***

Scripture study and systematic theology thought themselves above the fray, untouched by our constantly changing context. In its search for the Real Absolute, theology made one fatal mistake: It imagined that any notion of God had to be static and unchanging, an "unmoved mover," as Aristotelian philosophy called it.

Yet there is little evidence that this rigid god is the God presented in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and even less in our Christian understanding of God as

Trinity, who is clearly much more an active verb than a noun. But we preferred a stable notion of God as an old white man, sitting on a throne.

This is not a God you fall in love with, because humans are not programmed to fall in love with mere principles and forces. Love demands both give and take, which is what we mean by a “personal” God. And this is exactly what people of deep prayer invariably experience—*an inner dialogue of give and take, of giving and being received*. This is why the mystics consistently use words like mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness, and healing to describe what they experience as God. These all imply a God of relationship who does not just impose rules, but in fact changes them for us. Every time God forgives us, God is saying that relationship with us is more important than God’s own rules.

**Third Reading ~ from Sallie McFague in**  
*“The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*

"Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, has been concerned almost exclusively with the salvation of individual human beings, rather than with the liberation and well-being of the oppressed, including not only oppressed human beings, but also the oppressed earth and all its life-forms. God is incarnated in the world. . . . [This] suggests that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, for God is the breath or spirit that gives life to the billions of different bodies that make up God’s body."