

The readings we will hear today remind us that we are fortunate to be alive for this blessed season of Lent. Why? Because it means we still have the opportunity to repent of our sins and to turn back to God with our whole hearts. We all sin; it is the human condition. But with hearts in the right place, we feel remorse for our sins and we promise God, others, and ourselves to do better. How lucky we are that we can! As we continue through this holy season, let us make the most of this opportunity.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p. 172

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) **and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.** For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p. 12

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

**I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 140

A reading from the Book of Exodus

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

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.'"

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God**Responsorial Psalm*Psalm 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11.*

R/. The Lord is kind and merciful.

**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, heals all your ills,

He redeems your life from destruction, 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/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

*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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

*Luke 13:1-9*

**Glory to you, Lord**

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.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

- The two tragic events that Jesus addresses in the Gospel are quite disturbing. It appears that they were well known, as Jesus seems to be familiar with the first and refers to the second without initially describing it. These mass deaths presumably left a lasting impression, as Luke seems to assume his audience may recall them as well. Jesus uses these horrible tragedies to teach the people who have come to him that it was not the sinfulness of those at Siloam or in Galilee that brought about their deaths. "By no means!" (Luke 13:3, 5). No, it is that because they died suddenly and unexpectedly, they had no chance to repent of their sins. Those who hear Jesus' words (including us today) are given that chance. We have the wonderful opportunity to repent of our sins and return to God with clean hearts.
- If it wasn't enough that sometimes Jesus' parables are difficult to interpret, today we hear one that doesn't even have a proper ending. What happened that next year? Did the fig tree bear fruit? Did the owner cut it down? Evidently Jesus' point did not hinge on whether the fig tree eventually blossomed or not. Perhaps Jesus was trying to tell the people that God was always willing to give us another chance, but that we must make the most of it before it's too late. The telling of the parable was occasioned by the shocking sudden death of dozens of souls. They had not had time to repent. Every single person who hears the parable does. Every single person who hears the parable can yet bear fruit.
- Fasting, praying, and almsgiving. How are we doing at performing the traditional Lenten disciplines? Have they already begun to bear fruit, to make us aware of our dependence on God, to bring us into conversation with God, to give of our plenty and ourselves to those in need? Or are we the fig tree, needing a final chance from a merciful God? Let us heed the warning implicit in the first part of the Gospel, as well as the warning from Saint Paul, that even those who were baptized and shared in the spiritual food and drink in the desert (akin to the Eucharist) could be struck down by God.

**Question of the Week**

Looking at this Jubilee Year of Hope from God's perspective, what can I do during the week ahead to justify God's hope in me?

**Prayer of the Faithful:**

The Lord is kind and merciful, and so with confidence we appeal to God's kindness and mercy as we call to mind our needs and the needs of those around us.

- For the Church, that we may bear fruit in the future in ways that we have failed to do in the past, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For world leaders, that they may recognize the humanity in the refugee, the alien, and the immigrant and never allow them to be mistreated as the Israelites were in Moses' day, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For victims of human trafficking, and for all those without any power to leave or change a desperate situation, that they may not lose hope as they long to be freed from their captivity, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who mourn loved ones who have died, especially those who died suddenly and unexpectedly, that they may be comforted, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That the rebirth we witness in the spring for plants and trees and other living things that lay dormant all winter may be reflected in us and our parish community as our faith and our lives are renewed, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, hear the needs of your faithful people gathered here today and grant us the kindness and mercy we seek, through your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Communion Rite****The Lord's Prayer: p. 208**

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**Rite of Peace:**

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

**Communion:**

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

The body of Christ. **Amen.**


*Prayer after Communion:*

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery may come to true completion.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Concluding Rite:*

*Final Blessing:*

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**