

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.

First Reading

The Lord is compassion and love.

Psalms

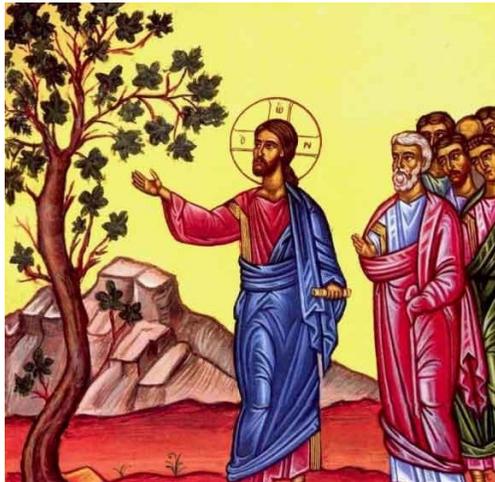
Love does not come to an end.

Second Reading

God of all compassion, Father of all goodness,
to heal the wounds our sins and selfishness bring upon us,
you bid us turn to fasting, prayer,
and sharing with our sisters and brothers.
We acknowledge our sinfulness, our guilt is ever before us:
when our weakness causes discouragement,
let your compassion fill us with hope
and lead us through a Lent of repentance
to the beauty of Easter joy.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Exodus 3: 1-8,13-15; Ps. 102 (103); 1 Cor. 10:1-6,10-12; Luke 13: 1-9



'Leave it
one more year.
It may bear fruit
next year ...'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Third Sunday of Lent
Year C, 20th March 2022

God of Compassion and Love

In the scriptures this week, we read of God's self-revelation and of his relationship with his people. This relationship is one of great love, but also contains an awareness of our fragility. Hence we heard of God's warnings, his continuous forgiveness and patience, and his offers to us to start again.

The **First Reading** from Exodus recounts the call of Moses and the revelation of God's sacred name.

St Paul, in the **Second Reading**, reminds us that, although we are baptized, we too can fall, as the chosen people did, despite being guided by Moses.

Jesus, in the **Gospel**, calls us to repentance, but reminds us, in the parable of the fig tree, that God is slow to anger and rich in mercy.

We can therefore join with the **Psalmist** in praise and thanksgiving to the God of compassion and love.

Perhaps this week, we can allow our readings to remind us not to be complacent, but to listen to God's word and never forget his blessings.

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.

First Reading Exodus 3:1–8; 13–15 (abbreviated)

Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. ‘I must go and look at this strange sight,’ Moses said, ‘and see why the bush is not burnt.’

Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush. ‘Moses, Moses!’ he said. ‘Here I am,’ Moses answered. ‘Come no nearer,’ he said. ‘Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.

Then Moses said to God, ‘I am to go, then, to the children of Israel. But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I Am who I Am. This is what you must say to the sons of Israel: “I Am has sent me to you.”’ And God also said to Moses, ‘You are to say to the children of Israel: “The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.’

I come to my place of prayer. Perhaps I light a candle, a symbol of God’s living presence. Perhaps, too, I take off my shoes: this is holy ground.

I take the time to absorb the reading.

How do I respond to this story of Moses and the burning bush?

How do I feel when I realise that I am in the presence of the God of Moses?

I speak to the Lord of this.

God is aware of the suffering of his people, and is asking Moses to go to them. What am I aware of?

Is God asking something of me today?

I sit in silence, allowing God to speak to me.

I entrust all those suffering to his loving care, and I finish my time of prayer with an ‘Our Father’.

Gospel Luke 13:1–9

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, ‘Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.’

He told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, “Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?”’ “Sir,” the man replied, “leave it one more year, and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.”’

I begin my prayer by relaxing my body and mind. I breathe in deeply, reminding myself that I am in God’s presence. I ask the Spirit to help me. I read the text slowly, a couple of times. Perhaps I place myself at Jesus’s feet as I hear him say these words to me. I hear him speak of tragic disasters, contrived and accidental. How do I respond to his comments? How does this warning make me feel ... frightened ... encouraged ...or ...? I reflect on why and how this is.

As I ponder the parable of the fig tree, I may think of personal times of failure or feelings of uselessness. In what ways does the parable give me confidence?

How do I consider the different responses of the owner and the man looking after the vineyard? I turn to the Lord. I speak to him from my heart, allowing him to love me and care for me.

Perhaps there is some sense in which this feels like a ‘final year’ for me? Whatever my response, I offer it to the Lord, trusting him to grant me all the graces I need to serve him and bear fruit.

I end my prayer with a ‘*Glory be ...*’