

# 6 MARCH 2022 Sunday Message

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

When he calls on me, I will answer him;  
I will deliver him and give him glory,  
I will grant him length of days.

**COLLECT**

Grant, almighty God,  
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,  
that we may grow in understanding  
of the riches hidden in Christ  
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** Deuteronomy 26:4-10

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.  
Moses said to the people: "The priest shall  
take the panner from your hand and lay it  
before the altar of the Lord your God. Then,  
in the sight of the Lord your God, you must  
make this pronouncement:  
'My father was a wandering Aramaean.  
He went down into Egypt to find refuge  
there, few in numbers; but there he became  
a nation, great, mighty, and strong. The  
Egyptians ill-treated us, they gave us no  
peace and inflicted harsh slavery on us.  
But we called on the Lord, the God of our  
Fathers. The Lord heard our voice and saw  
our misery, our toil and our oppression; and  
the Lord brought us out of Egypt with mighty  
hand and outstretched arm, with great terror,  
and with signs and wonders. He brought  
us here and gave us this land, a land where  
milk and honey flow. Here then I bring the  
first-fruits of the produce of the soil that  
you, Lord, have given me.' You must then  
lay them before the Lord your God, and bow  
down in the sight of the Lord your God."

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM** Psalm 90

Response:  
Be with me, O Lord, in my distress.

1. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High and abides in the shade of the Almighty says to the Lord: "My refuge, my stronghold, my God in whom I trust!" (R.)
2. Upon you no evil shall fall, no plague approach where you dwell. For you has he commanded his angels, to keep you in all your ways. (R.)
3. They shall bear you upon their hands lest you strike your foot against a stone. On the lion and the viper you will tread and trample the young lion and the dragon. (R.)
4. His love he set on me, so I will rescue him; protect him for he knows my name. When he calls I shall answer: "I am with you." I will save him in distress and give him glory. (R.)

**SECOND READING** Romans 10:8-13

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

Scripture says: The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved. When scripture says: those who believe in him will have no cause for shame, it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek: all belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask for his help, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!  
Man does not live on bread alone  
but on every word that comes from the  
mouth of God.  
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

**GOSPEL** Luke 4:1-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf." But Jesus replied, "Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone."

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours." But Jesus answered him. "Scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him alone."

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said to him "throw yourself down from here, for scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you  
to guard you,

and again:

They will hold you up on their hands  
in case you hurt your foot against a stone."

But Jesus answered him, "It has been said:

You must not put the Lord your God to the  
test."

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Give us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray,  
to make these offerings,  
for with them we celebrate the beginning  
of this venerable and sacred time.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes forth from the  
mouth of God.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

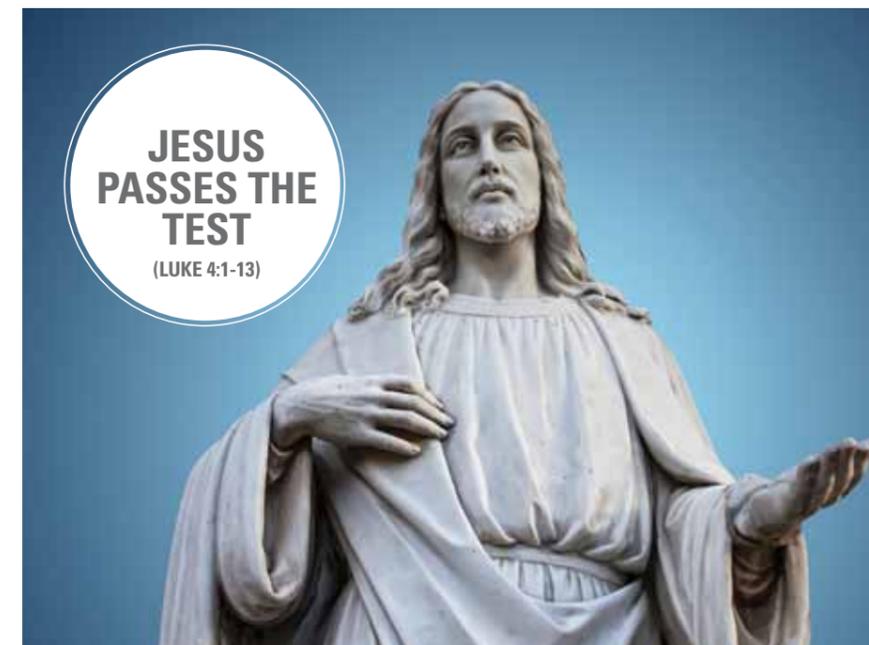
Renewed now with heavenly bread,  
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,  
and charity strengthened,  
we pray, O Lord,  
that we may learn to hunger for Christ,  
the true and living Bread,  
and strive to live by every word  
which proceeds from your mouth.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

May bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray,  
come down upon your people,  
that hope may grow in tribulation,  
virtue be strengthened in temptation,  
and eternal redemption be assured.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The call to experience Lent as a journey of  
conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods,  
helps us – as communities and as individuals  
– to revive the faith that comes from the  
living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath  
of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from  
the merciful heart of the Father.

Pope Francis

**THE WORD**

On this first Sunday of Lent, we are taken back to the prelude to the ministry of Jesus. The Gospel tradition begins with the figure of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, then Jesus being tested.

Luke and Matthew present a dramatic confrontation between Jesus and the devil. But we might note that Luke tells us in our Gospel reading today that it is the Spirit who sets up this encounter; Jesus is not ambushed in the wilderness, but rather the devil is acting, in a sense, as God's agent, to find out how Jesus understands what it means to be the Son of God. He has been revealed as such at his baptism, but will he use this knowledge as a kind of short-cut to being the Messiah people are expecting, or will he be the Son that God has in mind?

The three tests present Jesus with a choice: he can use his divine power for his own advantage or to attract a popular following. In either case, his mission is doomed. Or, he can be the Son and Messiah whom God intends, and the proof of that is not human success, but the cross. We will reflect on the final and crucial test at the end of Lent, in Holy Week. Our Gospel reading hints at this, when it ends with the ominous warning that "the devil left him, to return at the appointed time" – that is, at the Last Supper, when the story of Jesus' Passion begins. ■

**REFLECT**

For many people, Lent is an endurance test: we decide on a penance, usually giving up something, then follows six weeks of struggle to keep to that decision, much as we may make our new year resolutions, and very often with similar success – or lack thereof. But there is more to the idea of penance. First of all, it is to make us more conscious of God in our lives: it is meant to remind us of the Lord so that, if we deny ourselves something, we are meant to reflect on

why we have given it up, to remind ourselves of Jesus' sacrifice of himself for us, and to encourage us to deepen our relationship with God, so that at the end of Lent we are closer to God than at the beginning.

Lenten penance, self-denial, is not primarily an exercise in willpower or the opportunity to lose weight. We may well decide that it is a good opportunity to adopt a healthier lifestyle, but perhaps we might always begin by thinking about

**LEARN**

The Gospel text speaks about Jesus being tested rather than tempted.

Jesus is being tested as to what he understands by his being the Son of God, as revealed at his baptism, which immediately precedes this scene.

The final test in Luke's account takes place in Jerusalem.

This sequence reflects Luke's geographical understanding of Jesus' journey to the holy city and to the cross.

**SAY**

We do not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes  
from God's mouth.

(see Matthew 4:4)

**DO**

Decide on your Lenten penance; but remember every time you perform it to think of Jesus and his love for you.



ourselves as disciples of Jesus and reflecting on whether we might adjust our behaviour and attitudes so that we live out our Christian vocation more fully.

The three traditional aspects of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. First is prayer, communion with the Lord; fasting, self-denial, comes next; and then almsgiving, the giving of the money we have saved to those in need, is one result of our Lenten penance. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face.  
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;  
hide not your face from me.

**COLLECT**

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING** Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Taking Abram outside the Lord said, "Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants" he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

"I am the Lord" he said to him "who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to make you heir to this land." "My Lord, the Lord" Abram replied "how am I to know that I shall inherit it?" He said to him, "Get me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon." He brought him all these, cut them in half and put half on one side and half facing it on the other; but the birds he did not cut in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses but Abram drove them off.

Now as the sun was setting Abram fell into a deep sleep, and terror seized him. When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves. That day the Lord made a Covenant with Abram in these terms:

"To your descendants I give this land, from the wadi of Egypt to the Great River."

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Psalm 26

Response:

**The Lord is my light and my help.**

- The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; before whom shall I shrink? (R.)
- O Lord, hear my voice when I call; have mercy and answer.  
Of you my heart has spoken:  
"Seek his face." (R.)
- It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face.  
Dismiss not your servant in anger; you have been my help. (R.)
- I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.  
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.  
Hope in the Lord! (R.)

**SECOND READING** Philippians 3:17-4:1

(For shorter form, read between > <)

>A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians.<

My brothers, be united in following my rule of life. Take as your models everybody who is already doing this and study them as you used to study us. I have told you often, and I repeat it today with tears, there are many who are behaving as the enemies of the cross of Christ. They are destined to be lost. They make foods into their god and they are proudest of something they ought to think shameful; the things they think important are earthly things. >For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe.

So then, my brothers and dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful in the Lord. I miss you very much, dear friends; you are my joy and my crown.

The word of the Lord. <

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Glory and praise to you, O Christ!**  
**From the bright cloud the Father's voice was heard:**

**"This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!"**  
**Glory and praise to you, O Christ!**

**GOSPEL**

Luke 9:28-36

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." – He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him". And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in God,**  
**the Father almighty,**  
**Creator of heaven and earth,**  
**and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

*(all bow during the next two lines)*

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**  
**born of the Virgin Mary,**  
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**  
**was crucified, died and was buried;**

**he descended into hell;**  
**on the third day he rose again from the dead;**  
**he ascended into heaven,**  
**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;**  
**from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic Church,**  
**the communion of saints,**  
**the forgiveness of sins,**  
**the resurrection of the body,**  
**and life everlasting.**  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, cleanse us of our faults and sanctify your faithful in body and mind for the celebration of the paschal festivities. Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;**  
**listen to him.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

As we receive these glorious mysteries, we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

Bless your faithful, we pray, O Lord, with a blessing that endures for ever, and keep them faithful to the Gospel of your Only Begotten Son, so that they may always desire and at last attain that glory whose beauty he showed in his own Body, to the amazement of his Apostles. Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

.....  
Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and, as a consequence, benefits someone else, if it helps us cultivate the style of the good Samaritan, who bent down to his brother in need and took care of him.

*Pope Francis*

**THE WORD**

*Interior of the Transfiguration Church on Mount Tabor in Israel*

The episode in today's Gospel, which we usually call the transfiguration of Jesus, marks, in dramatic form, the turning point in Jesus' ministry.

Up to this point, he has been preaching and healing in Galilee: now he begins his journey towards Jerusalem and his destiny. The vision of Jesus in glory, which is granted to his closest male disciples – Peter, James and John – gives them, and ourselves, a glimpse of Jesus' deepest being. We recognise the similarities between this incident and that of Jesus' baptism: the cloud represents the divine presence and the voice of God, which declares Jesus as God's Son, the Chosen One. Just as Jesus' baptism stands at the beginning of his ministry in Galilee, so the vision of Jesus in glory marks the start of his journey towards Jerusalem, his ministry in Judea and the holy city, which leads to his Passion and death on Calvary.

Luke makes connections with the Jewish traditions found in the Hebrew scriptures. The two figures who appear in glory, in conversation with Jesus, are Moses and Elijah. Moses received the Law from God on Mount Sinai and facilitated the Covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel. Elijah represents the prophetic movement within the story of Israel, which challenges the legal system and reminds the clergy and laity of the deeper meaning of the Law: that its purpose is to bring the person and nation into an intimate, personal relationship with, and commitment to, the Lord.

It is this vision, in both senses, which is given to us as we continue our Lenten journey towards Easter. ■

**REFLECT**

Once in a while, we may have a sense of how life can really be, of the person we would like to be ideally. The story in today's Gospel is something like that: Peter wants to prolong the experience of seeing Jesus in glory, so he proposes constructing shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Luke observes, perhaps wryly, and maybe affectionately, that "He did not know what he was saying."

Peter is the impulsive character, always speaking before thinking. But perhaps he is more honest than many others: he is not calculating and always getting into trouble. When we read or listen to the Gospels, we are invited to ask ourselves, with whom do I identify? With what character am I most in sympathy? There is no right or wrong answer; we are being invited to enter into the Gospel story and to make it part of ourselves.

Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about "his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem". Jesus is about to embark on the journey which will lead him to his destiny. None of us know where life will lead us, or what life has in store for us. Our observance of Lent, however we decide to keep it, is intended to help us reflect more deeply on our relationship with the Lord. Peter wanted to take a short-cut; he was quickly disabused of this notion. ■

**DO**

Make the sign of the cross: reflect on how this represents Jesus' passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem.

**LEARN**

The transfiguration of Jesus is the mirror image of the story of his baptism.

Both reveal to the readers of the Gospel Jesus' true identity as the Son of God.

The baptism stands at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

The transfiguration heralds the start of Jesus' journey to Judea and Jerusalem.

**SAY**

**This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him**  
(Luke 9:35)

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

**My eyes are always on the Lord,  
for he rescues my feet from the snare.  
Turn to me and have mercy on me,  
for I am alone and poor.**

**COLLECT**

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, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING** Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

A reading from the book of Exodus.

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," he 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," he said, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.

And the Lord said, "I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow."

Then Moses said to God, "I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' 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" he added "is what you must say to the sons 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."

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM** Psalm 102

Response:

**The Lord is compassion and love.**

1. My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name. My soul give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. (R.)

2. It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. (R.)
3. The Lord does deeds of justice, gives judgement for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses and his deeds to Israel's sons. (R.)
4. The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. For as the heavens are high above the earth so strong is his love for those who fear him. (R.)

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

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

I want to remind you, brothers, how our fathers were all guided by a cloud above them and how they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in this cloud and in this sea; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, most of them failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert.

These things all happened as warnings for us, not to have the wicked lusts for forbidden things that they had. You must never complain: some of them did, and they were killed by the Destroyer.

All this happened to them as a warning, and it was written down to be a lesson for us who are living at the end of the age. The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!**  
**Repent, says the Lord,  
for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.**  
**Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!**

**GOSPEL** Luke 13:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

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 the 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.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

*(all bow during the next two lines)*

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings, and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins, may take care to forgive our neighbour. Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**The sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for her young:  
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.**

**Blessed are they who dwell in your house,  
for ever singing your praise.**

**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.**

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

Direct, O Lord, we pray, the hearts of your faithful, and in your kindness grant your servants this grace: that, abiding in the love of you and their neighbour, they may fulfil the whole of your commands. Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life and in this way to know the fundamental truth: who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life. *Pope Benedict XVI*

**THE WORD****WHAT DID THEY DO TO DESERVE THAT?**

(LUKE 13:1-9)



*Depiction of Pontius Pilate washing his hands*

**This is the second time that the name of Pilate has occurred in Luke's narrative. This Roman official had a reputation for ruthlessly dealing with anyone he saw as a troublemaker, so as we are in Lent, and following Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem, we have a hint of what is to come.**

The common attitude of the time was that misfortune was the result of sin, which Jesus seems to accept. But his teaching is that the tragic fate of these people of Galilee does not indicate that they were particularly guilty of any offence more serious than anyone else. Nor were those crushed under a toppling building in Jerusalem. Rather, Jesus is emphasising just how precarious human life can be; his listeners should not take life and health for granted, nor put off being converted and living a decent life under the word of God. A sudden death may not be due to divine punishment, but it may happen all the same.

The second section of our Gospel reading concentrates on the fig tree which fails to produce fruit. A fruitful tree is a sign of God's blessing, and we find examples of the fig, the olive, the grape-bearing vine as positive proof of God's care for the people. We note that the person in charge of the garden argues, politely, with the landowner, to give the plant another and final chance. This echoes the message of the first passage, that no one can put off indefinitely the effort to reorder and reorient their lives. ■

**REFLECT**

Recent times have shown us how precarious human life actually is. The forces of nature – wind, storm, flood and fire – have wreaked havoc on our human societies and cities, and on our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. Perhaps it might help our understanding and attitude if we thought of nature as a living force. Then the events which have caused so much suffering to so many people would be not so much due to unpredictable disasters as to human beings upsetting the balance

between ourselves and what we call the "natural world".

If we consider the two examples which Jesus gives in the first part of our Gospel today, we find that the calamities he mentions may well be interpreted, according to the official doctrine of retribution (fidelity is rewarded, disloyalty is punished), as the judgement of God. But if we consider the two cases, we could say that the first is due to the cruel and cynical decision of the Roman governor;

**LEARN**

Pontius Pilate was finally removed from office for cruelty and exiled to Gaul, part of present-day France.

Personal disaster, such as illness, poverty or other misfortune, was often seen in biblical terms as the result of sin in the person's life.

A good harvest of wheat, figs, grapes, olives was seen as a blessing from God; sterility in a woman, lack of fruit in crops was regarded as God's withholding of blessing.

**SAY**

**The Lord's is the earth and  
its fullness: the world and  
all its peoples**

(Psalm 24:1)

**DO**

When you see reports of the next natural disaster, ask yourself what you can do to address climate change.



the second may well be attributed to shoddy building workmanship.

One of the unfortunate effects of the Jewish and Christian view of what we call "salvation history" has been the separation of God's intervening in history – in the Exodus event, in the person of Jesus – and the world of nature. If we were to see nature as a living force, protesting violently against human abuse of the environment, perhaps we could better respond accordingly. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.  
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;  
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

**COLLECT**

O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Joshua 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua.

The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you."

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Psalm 33

Response:

**Taste and see that the Lord is good.**

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad. **(R.)**
2. Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name. I sought the Lord and he answered me; from all my terrors he set me free. **(R.)**
3. Look towards him and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed. This poor man called; the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appearing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made

the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!  
I will leave this place and go to my father and say:**

**"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."**

**Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!**

**GOSPEL**

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. "This man" they said "welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he spoke this parable to them:

"A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

"When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, 'How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.' So he left the place and went back to his father.

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it: we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

"Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. 'Your brother has come' replied the servant 'and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.' He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But

for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.'

"The father said, 'My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

*(all bow during the next two lines)*

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them

and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

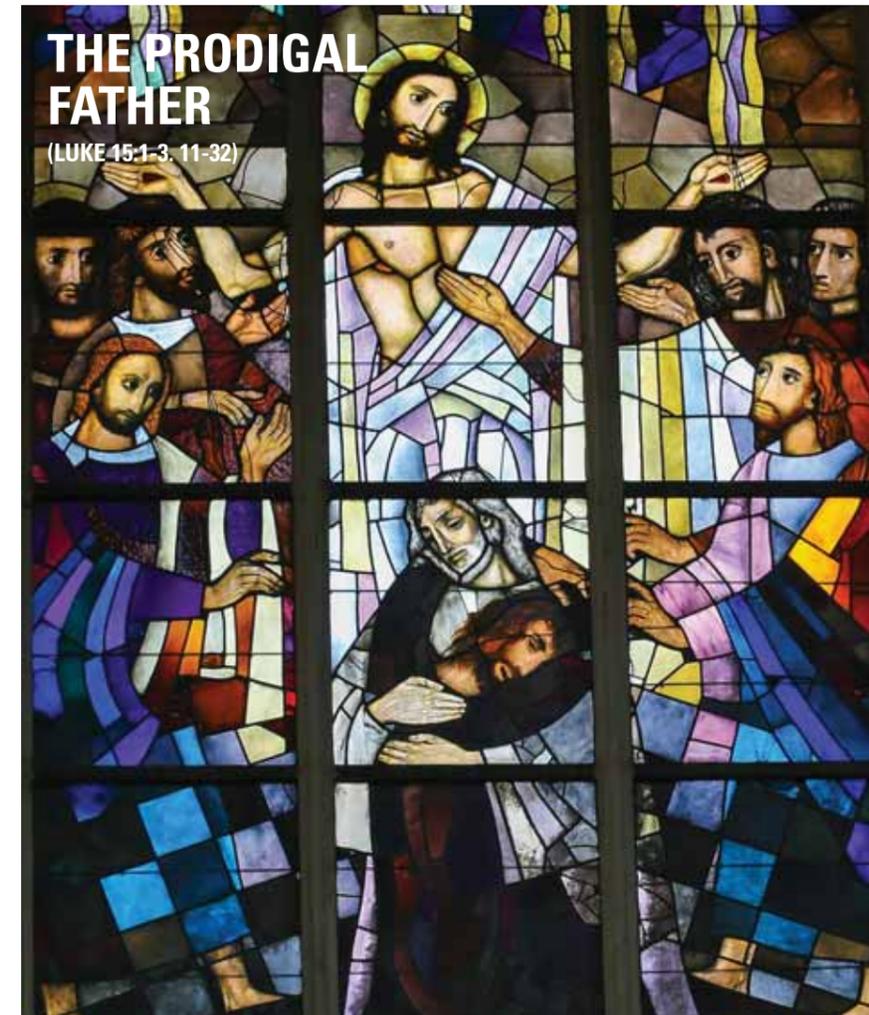
**You must rejoice, my son, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendour of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity. Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

Look upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life by your unfailing light to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good. Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**THE WORD**

Stained glass window in the Church of St Andrew in Antwerp, Belgium, depicting Jesus and the parable of the prodigal son

**Our gospel reading today is set in the context of the critics of Jesus muttering that he is associating with people whom the authorities consider less than acceptable, namely "tax collectors and sinners".**

The former were unpopular as they were regarded as collaborators with the Roman occupiers, and anyone who was not observing the proper religious customs was deemed to be a "sinner". This did not mean that the person concerned was particularly immoral but simply that, for some reason or other, they were not fulfilling the requirements of the Law. Yet these are the people who are responding positively to Jesus and his message. Jesus shares food with them, a clear signal in that culture that they are welcomed and accepted by him and, by implication, by God. His critics understand the significance of his actions and that is what infuriates them.

Jesus uses the parable of the lost son to illustrate the meaning of his action and of his message. A better title for this well-loved story would be "The Prodigal Father". The word "prodigal" is not common and many people think that it means repentant or regretful, but in fact the basic meaning is wasteful. It is not the irresponsible young man who is the centre of the story; rather, it is the anxious parent who has been looking out for his return, who casts aside his own dignity to rush to meet him, who won't listen to any words of apology, who throws an extravagant party to welcome him home. Jesus tells us that this is God's attitude towards those who have made a mess of their lives, and that all that God can say is "Welcome home!" ■

**SAY**

The father ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly (Luke 15:20)

**LEARN**

Jesus' critics are usually members of the religious establishment.

Tax collectors were unpopular as they were regarded as collaborators with the occupying Roman authorities.

The term "sinners" covered anyone who did not, or could not, observe the Law properly: it did not necessarily imply serious moral failings.

**DO**

Examine your conscience about your Lenten resolution: does your penance help you to feel closer to God and make you more aware of God's presence?

**REFLECT**

The parables are traps: we are told a story and invited to make a judgement. Then Jesus says, "That's all very well, but have you thought about it from this point of view?" Many of us may sympathise with the elder brother, who has kept all the rules, obeyed his father and feels aggrieved at the welcome extended to his errant sibling on the latter's return.

What emerges from the dialogue between the father and the elder son is that there is little affection on the part of the son: he won't go into the house where the welcome party is taking place; he talks about "slaving" for his father and never disobeying him; he refers to the other young man as "this son of yours" rather than "my brother". So all that his faithful observance has done is to turn him into an embittered person, at odds with everyone else.

We note that the story is left unfinished. The father pleads with him to change his mind and attitude. Whether he does or not is left up to the reader. Each of us is invited to finish the narrative for ourselves. But the real question which Jesus is asking is "What would you do?" This is part of our Lenten challenge. ■