

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent - C  
Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15;  
I Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12;  
Luke 13:1-9  
Little Flower - 3/3/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's reading from Exodus, God manifested himself in the burning bush. When Moses approached the bush, "*God said, 'Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.'*" Here God introduces the concept of sacred space. I want to suggest three sacred places in our lives. As Catholics, we believe that our churches are sacred places. They are sacred places because they are set aside for the worship of God and we experience the presence of God in them in a special way. When Fr. John built our beautiful church, he had two goals. He wanted a church that was completely dedicated to the worship of God rather than a church in a school, and he wanted it to look like the great basilicas and cathedrals he had seen in Europe.

Second, we all have our own personal sacred places, places where we have encountered God and his love in a special way. For example, one Purdue graduate told me that whenever she returns to Purdue, she always visits St. Thomas, the student parish, because it was a place where she experienced God in a special way during her college years. Where are the sacred places in your life?

Third, one of the sacred places in all of our lives is the center of our being. The Second Vatican Council taught that "conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths" [GS 16]. In other words, our heart of hearts is a sacred place where we are alone with God.

Today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is a fascinating reading. In writing about the Israelites who left Egypt, Paul uses sacramental imagery of baptism and Eucharist: "*all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*" and "*all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink....Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert.*" Paul went on to write that "*these things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us.*"

Some Christians and even some Catholics believe that if they believe in Christ and/or are baptized, they necessarily will be saved. St. Paul rejects this. Likewise, since St. Paul refers not just to baptism but also to Eucharist, which implies religious practice, one might also argue that he also rejects the idea that those who practice their religion will necessarily be saved. Consequently, he ends with a serious warning to all of us who are Christian or Catholic: "*Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.*"

At the same time, in today's Gospel Jesus rejects the idea that only good things happen to good people and bad things happen only to bad people. He suggests that the Galileans murdered by Pilate and the eighteen killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed were not necessarily any better or worse than anyone else. However, like Paul, he calls his listeners to accountability for their sinful choices: "*But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!*" However, with the parable of the fig tree, Jesus reminds us that as long as we live, we can be forgiven and can change our lives.

My brothers and sisters, tomorrow (Monday) evening will be our Lenten Penance Service at 7:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes. I invite and encourage you to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Monday evening. Several priests will be available to hear confessions. In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to repentance. The Sacrament of Reconciliation not only brings forgiveness for our past sins but empowers us to live better, more Christian lives in the future.