

First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15
Response: **"The Lord is compassion and love"** (Ps. 102:8)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102:1-4, 6-8, 11.
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12
Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

The Risen Lord is not only in the glory of heaven, he is here with us on earth in every moment of our lives, because he loves us. He frees us from our slavery to sin. He calls us to repentance. If only we will listen to his voice. He is the Rock. He is the Tree of Life.

In a blazing bush, Moses encounters God. **"Here I am"** says Moses (Ex.3:4). **"I Am who I Am"** says God (Ex.3:14). The presence of Moses is temporal. The Presence of God, *Shekinah*, is everlasting, love and faithfulness, *hesed ve'emeth*.

God is with his people, from earliest times down to latest. He is with them in all their pain and suffering. He is **"the Lord, the God of your ancestors"** (Ex.3:6, 15) and "says, **"I have heard the people's cry. I mean to deliver them"** (Ex.3:7).

The people's response in today's liturgy is a psalm of David, giving God praise and thanksgiving. **"My soul, give thanks to the Lord"** (Ps. 102:8). David praises God for the joys of life.

The psalm is one of the most beautiful hymns in the bible, recognizing God's fatherly care, his blessings, his forgiveness, his healing, his justice, his mercy, and most of all **"the Lord is compassion and love"** (Ps. 102:8), to be fully seen in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.

The Sundays of Lent lead the Church on a spiritual journey, prophetically seen in the People of God in the desert. Paul shows **"how our fathers were guided by a cloud above and how they all passed through the sea"** (1Cor.10:1) but some **"failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert"** (1Cor.10:5). How **can this be a warning to us?**

Paul shows God's great love for his people as they journey on. **"They ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink from the rock"** (1Cor.10:3); and St. Paul says **"the rock was Christ,"** (*Ibid.*) and tree of life, sustaining us for the journey.

The Jews confront Jesus with their local calamities, and he shows that we are all sinners and have to repent. Whatever time we have, we must use it to our advantage spiritually. In the parable of the **"fig tree"**, the grace of time is given for it **"to bear fruit"** (Lk. 13:8).

While God is compassion, nourishing His people, they are expected to bear fruit. God comes **"looking for it and finds none"** (Lk.13:6). **What do we expect God to do in such circumstances?** Lent is a time of grace to examine ourselves in the presence of God.

Study Jesus' parable of the fig tree in the **Gospel** (Lk. 13:1-9). **What sort of tree are you?**

How do we eat from the Tree of Life today, and drink from the Rock? (Mass)

Lent is an important time of grace. Time to repent and turn to God's Kingdom. (Teaching)

Follow up on your spiritual commitments. Be like a tree by flowing waters of grace. (Witness)
"Let everything you do, be guided by what you read in the Gospel" (*Didache*. 15).

FOR THE CHILDREN

Share with the children the Gospel for today, especially the parable of the fig tree.

What are the moments when God comes to us, not in a bush or rock, but deeply in his Son, and we go to him? (Prayer, Sacraments)

Discuss how the Gardener, Christ, cares for us and what fruit do we bear? (Teaching)

What are we doing during Lent to be like a tree bearing good fruit? (Witness)

FOR TEENAGERS (Shared Christian Praxis)

Name the Present Action: We see Israel in the desert. Jesus speaks of repentance. **How does it all connect with Lent?**

Your Story and Vision: **What role is Lent in your life? Are you like the fig tree?**

Church's Story and Vision: Church's teaching on what is Lent, biblically and liturgically.

Yours and Church's Vision: **What are your plans for Lent this year? How are you progressing?**

RCIA

In the RCIA process, during Lent, this Sunday can be an occasion for the FIRST SCRUTINY or PURIFICATION of the Catechumens or Elect. Here the ministers, after the homily, conduct a special rite of repentance, followed by certain prayers against evil, after which is the dismissal of the Elect.

"As for you Gilgamesh, may you find that life for which you seek." (i)

(i) EPIC OF GILGAMESH. Transl. Sandars N.K. 6. 'THE RETURN.' Penguin Books Ltd. Harmondsworth, U.K. 1960. p.114.

LIFE EXPERIENCE

"Don't miss out on *Tu BiShvat*," said my Jewish friend. It is a time to celebrate the New Year of trees and fruits. It involves planting a tree and eating dried fruit. It is also a special time to think about relationships with people, with plants, with nature and the whole of God's creation. There is a closeness in the life of a tree and the life of a person. Both come from fertilized seed, and need nourishment in order to grow and be of service. Deuteronomy writes: ה ש ד ה ע ך א ד ם , *ha'adam 'ets hasadeh*, a man is a tree of the field (Dt.20:19).

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina heard that sheep are loved for its meat and for its fleas. She did not know the word 'fleece', so when it was mentioned, 'fleas' came to mind. What thinks the child thinks of 'consubstantial' in prayer, sounding close to sub-station, possibly in outer-space. Will Angelina please grow up and learn? Will she learn that not only she but even some bishops and theologians have not got it right according to the Council of Nicaea? It is a debatable, philosophical word with a history of interpretations and with different schools of thought, east and west. So spare the child, spare the complicated theologian, spare us the confusion, and let us as Latin/Greek illiterates, in the simplicity of our vernacular, confess the mystery of God. We have a translation which was accepted and used for all, even little children and Angelina. It was written in the spirit of Vatican II, the greatest Council of the Church, personally convoked by pope and bishops, which is more than what happened at the Council of Nicaea, with the jargon of its era and problems of its times. The Council of Nicaea was in fact, called by the Emperor, with approval of Rome, where two priests were sent as legates representing the pope. If Nicaea is authentic, Vatican II, *a fortiori*, is more so by reason of its origin and fullness. As for Angelina, like most of the Body of Christ, has been practicing the faith without the questionable use of Latin and Greek terminologies.

IMPORTANT WORD: **Yahweh**

God tells Moses: "***I Am who Am***", י ח ו ה , **Yahweh**, denotes the life and vitality of a living God. Do other gods by contrast really exist? **They are nothing** (Is.41:24). **Yahweh** means "He is, was, and always will be." He is the ultimate being from which all else has its being. There is no proper walk with God until we begin to know the God we walk with. God has chosen to reveal himself. He is an eternal, loving and faithful God. He is י ח ו ה ר פ א ך , **Yahweh Ropheka**, the God who heals (Ex.15:26). He is י ח ו ה נ ס י , **Yahweh Nissi**, God my banner, who protects and leads on to victory (Ex.17:15). **Yahweh** who first revealed himself in the burning bush is now fully revealed in his Son, **Jesus Christ**.

Watchword: “*The Lord is compassion and love*” (Ps.102:8)

Hebrew: רַחוּם יְחֹוָה וּרְב־חַסֵּד *Rahom Yahweh verav-hased.*

Greek: Οἰκτιρῶν ὁ Κύριος, καὶ πολυελεός. *Oiktirmon ho Kurios, kai polueleos*

Latin: **Misericors Dominus et multae miserationis.**

Portuguese: **Misericordioso e o Senhor e grande em benignidade.**

Spanish: **Misericordioso es Señor y grande en misericordia.**

French: **Le Seigneur est bienveillant et d'une immense bonte.**

German: **Barmherzig ist der Herr, und von großer Güte.**

Afrikaans: **Barmhartig is die Here, en vol liefde.**

Zulu: **UNkulunkulu unobubele, kuvama umusa.**

Xhosa: **UNdikhoyo unenceba,yimvuze-mvuze enobubele.**

Sotho: **Morena o na le kutlwelobohloko,o tletse mohau.**

Irish: **Is gramhar trocaireach e an Tiarna**