

THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Sun	am: 93, 96	Exodus 3:1-15	1 Cor 10:1-13	Luke 13:1-9
Mar 7	pm: 34			

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: On the Third Sunday of Lent those traditions that practice the ancient Rites of the Catechumenate observe and celebrate the First Scrutiny and Exorcism for the Elect (are those in our midst who are preparing for Baptism). In the Scrutiny Rites, those preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil as well as the entire assembly are called to examine the areas in their lives where they thirst for God and need God's healing love. During the week the presentation of the creed is celebrated with the elect as part of their preparation to be fully immersed in the Easter mysteries. These are ancient rites and they may, at first, seem strange to many but they are profoundly rooted in ancient life of the church as well as reflect the dynamics of human experience. This Sunday like all of Lent reminds us to the need to examine (scrutinize) who we are and how who we say we are should be reflected in all areas of our lives. What truly are the realities of our lives where we face what we do and what we fail to do? This Sunday reminds us that we need healing from our frailties but that can only happen when we face come to examine our lives and face them.

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: The story of Fig Tree is quite familiar to us and oft times sounds a bit unusual as this does not resonate with our modern experience. But if we can truly listen for a moment to the Gospel we should be moved by Jesus' words and compelled to repent. Perhaps our inclination is to make excuses as to why we cannot give ourselves to God in complete surrender, if so we should take note about the first lesson where Moses when confronted with the Presence of God looks for a way out and uses his own sinfulness as grounds. The key is not to settle for the fact that we are sinful but to seek God's grace to overcome our human failings. It would be wise to be mindful of the words from St. Paul in the Second Lesson: *"Let anyone who thinks they are standing upright watch out lest they fall!"* When one hears those words the churches uses of the scrutinies makes perfect sense, not just for those who are seeking to be baptized at the Great Vigil of Easter but for all of us!

PRAYER OF THE DAY: Lord God, you call your children from the North and the South, the East and the West to be renewed and redeemed in your saving love. Give us discernment this Lenten Journey to not in our own power and wisdom but in the mystery of your grace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: "The life of the Christian has three distinguishing aspects: deeds, words and thought. Thought comes first, then words, since our words express openly the interior conclusions of the mind. Finally, after thoughts and words, comes action, for our deeds carry out what the mind has conceived. So when one of these results in our acting or speaking or thinking, we must make sure that all our thoughts, words and deeds are controlled by the divine ideal, the revelation of Christ.

For then our thoughts, words and deeds will not fall short of the nobility of their implications. --- *St. Gregory of Nyssa*

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – On this Sunday of the Scrutinies, try to get a sense of what those who are seeking to be part of the community are willing to undertake. Pray and experience this with the following models For those comfortable in a more Reformed context go to http://www.worship.ca/docs/ww_147.pdf and for those more comfortable in a more catholic context go to <http://www.catholicnh.org/media/files/catholic-faith/First%20Scrutiny.pdf> visit a church member or neighbor who has lost a loved one in recent times and be in fellowship with them and hear their journey in a ministry of love and presence.

Mon	am: 80	Gen 44:18-34	1 Cor 7:25-31	Mark 5:21-43
Mar 8	pm: 77, 79			

LENT III: *Saint Arian and His Companions, 311*

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: An Alexandrian martyr with Theoticus and three others. Arian was the governor of Thebes. He and his companions witnessed the martyrdom of Sts. Apollonius and Philemon in Alexandria and were converted. Upon confessing the faith, the men were thrown into the sea. These are but one of a group of martyrs in Alexandria from the years 257-390 who were persecuted either by the Arian heretics or the Roma persecutors.

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: In considering the first lesson we are given pause today to come to terms without our own struggles of jealousy and envy. In the story Judah convinces his father to trust Benjamin to his care and takes full responsibility (of course this didn't work well when he had similar charge for Joseph). In God's infinite wisdom the eleven brothers find themselves in their brother Joseph's house whom they betrayed and are worried and frightened (guilt from past sins) and their money had been put back in their sacks (part of Joseph's test for honesty). Joseph only showed his interests in them and "their" father and then "met" Benjamin his full brother who he had not seen in 20 plus years. Despite having the upper hand he did not act on his position instead struggles with his emotions as his brothers are seated in exact order of their ages. Despite the blessing Joseph placed upon Benjamin the brothers did not have the same envy they had 20 years prior with their now successful brother instead they rejoiced in their young brother's good fortune. The brothers of the Tribes of Judah remind us again that living with such betrayal is a burdensome life and that acting out of jealousy, envy or anger albeit for a moment can have a lifetime of repercussions.

PRAYER OF THE DAY: O Most gracious Father, thou Spring of an Eternal Charity, who hast so loved mankind, that thou didst open thy bosom, and send thy holy Son to convey thy mercies to us; and thou didst create Angels and Men, that thou might have objects to whom thou might communicate thy goodness: Give me grace to follow so

glorious a precedent that I may never envy the prosperity of any one, but rejoice to honor him whom thou honors, to love him whom thou loves, to commend the virtuous, to discern the precious from the vile, giving honor to whom honor belongs, that I may go to heaven in the noblest way of rejoicing in the good of others.. Amen - - *Blessed Jeremy Taylor*

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: "You can out-distance that which is running after you, but not what is running inside you". --- *Rwandan Proverb*

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – What have you coveted for yourself or denied another. Praise? A gift or reward? Whatever it is release the coveting of it by giving it to another and do so anonymously.

Tue Mar 9	am: 78:1-39 pm: 78:40-72	Gen 45:1-15	1 Cor 7:32-40	Mark 6:1-13
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LENT III: *Saint Bossa of York, 320*

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: Saint Bossa was a monk at Whitby, England, under Saint Hilda who was consecrated bishop of the southern half of Northumbria, now Yorkshire in 678 with his see at York, when Saint Wilfrid was driven out by King Egfrid for refusing to accept the division of his see. Wilfrid returned in 686, but Bossa took over the diocese in 691 when Wilfrid was again exiled following a quarrel with King Aldfrid; Bossa was know as a chief pastor with great holiness and pastoral ability until his death in 686. Saint Bede praises Bossa as "a man beloved by God . . . of most unusual merit and sanctity."

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: According to the Reformer John Calvin, Psalm 78:7 tells us to do three things: trust God, remember what God’s done and keep God’s commands. This is a pretty good summary of this important Psalm appointed for today so what seem to be our dilemma with a formula that is pretty straight forward. Could it be that some of us we see God as a provider but do not have the abiding love for Him as author and creator of all that we are? The Psalm today goes to the heart of needs and not wants and the reality that God knows when we speak words of sincerity knowing full well that our hearts do wander and our thoughts are far from Him. Unlike us, God is not contained or restrained with needs. There can be no doubt that God cares for His creation This psalm sharply contrasts God's faithfulness within the creation and, on the other hand, the faithlessness of those of us in a covenanted community. As God’s people, what do we need to remember? What have we forgotten of the covenant God put forward for us? How is God still blessing us, and we are unwilling to see?

PRAYER OF THE DAY: O my God! Source of all mercy! I acknowledge your sovereign power. While recalling how I have the wasted the gifts you have given me, I believe that You, Lord, can in an instant turn this loss to gain. Broken as I am, yet I firmly believe that You can do all things. Please restore to me the time lost, giving me your grace, both now and in the future.

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: "Remember that he who will always walk faithfully in God's presence, always ready to give Him an account of all his actions, will never be separated from Him by consenting to sin. -- *St. Thomas Aquinas*

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – Share an answered prayer with a friend—give witness to the mighty work of God in your life. Commit to a private and public action to give thanks to God for what you received.

Wed Mar 10	am: 119:97-120 pm: 81, 82	Gen 45:16-28	1 Cor 8:1-13	Mark 6:13-29
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LENT III: *Saint Anastasia the Patrician, 6th Century*

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: Saint Anastasia the Patrician was the daughter of an Egyptian nobleman and a lady-in-waiting in the court of Emperor Justinian in Constantinople, now Istanbul. Justinian pursued her amorously, and she fled the court to take up a religious vocation in a convent in Alexandria, Egypt. When Justinian's consort, Theodora, died, Anastasia had to flee again, as he was seeking her. She went out into the Egyptian desert where she was allowed to dress as a monk and to remain in place. For twenty-eight years Anastasia remained in solitude in the desert, in constant prayer.

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: Today in the Gospel and in the life of the Saint who is commemorated this day we meet two truly courageous people filled with honesty and integrity. I say both of these people had deep courage and faith although their circumstances are different because the easier way for both would have been to give assent to the powers over them. They show us again that to be an authentic disciple requires courage, readiness to lose everything and even one's life. It requires readiness to lose relations, friends. It lies on the deep conviction that righteousness and honesty are precious as values rather than instantaneous pleasures and anything else in this life. How many times have we taken the path of placation in our life and relationships, seeking to satisfy all sides? This is a most dangerous choice. Some may argue that it is the option taken by people willing to please God and Satan at the same time. They like to live in the light and darkness at the same time. They want to serve two masters at once.

The disastrousness of this option lies on the fact that it is almost impossible to identify people with such behaviors, and therefore impossible to know whether one can count on them or not. People with such behaviors tend to jump on the left side when the right side needs their clear allegiance, and vice versa. The ambiguity of such people makes them unworthy of any confidence in the eyes of everyone. It is always dangerous to trust them. How can one build up a community of faith, a family or a singular relationship without integrity, faith and the courage of one convictions?

PRAYER OF THE DAY: Merciful Father, fill my heart with your love and keep me faithful to the gospel of Christ. Give me the grace to rise above human weakness. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: "God never deserts a man, unless He is deserted by that man first. For even if a man shall have committed grievous sins once, twice, and a third time, God still looks for him, "so that he may be converted and live." -- *St. Caesarius of Arles*

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – Go to <http://www.thebiblesite.org/HowItWorks.ph> and donate a bible to a Christian souls who is standing against persecution to bring the Word of God to people and places that do not know Christ. Demonstrate your integrity and courage by then challenging another person in Christ to do the same,

Thurs Mar 11	am: 42, 43 pm: 85, 86	Gen 46:1-7, 28-34	1 Cor 9:1-15	Mark 6:30-46
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LENT III: *St. Gregory the Great, 604.*

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: St. Gregory is remembered by Anglicans for sending a party of missionaries headed by Augustine of Canterbury to preach the Gospel to the pagan Anglo-Saxon tribes that had invaded England and largely conquered or displaced the Celtic Christians previously living there. Gregory had originally hoped to go to England as a missionary himself, but was pressed into service elsewhere, as bishop of Rome. He accordingly sent others, but took an active interest in their work, writing numerous letters both to Augustine and his monks and to their English people. He is also remembered for influence on the forms of public worship throughout the West. He developed the idea of a Lectionary and founded a school for the training of church musicians, from which came Gregorian chant (plainchant) which is named for him. He is known along with Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine of Hippo as one of the Four Latin Doctors of the ancient Church.

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: What do you thirst for? What do you pine for? That is the passionate image given in the Psalm today. Can you imagine yearning for something so powerful that it refreshes the whole of one's being? Well that is what God is for us that refreshment but it is not just about feeling better about ourselves. Did you know that the words "I thirst!" were scribbled on the wall of the room of Mother Teresa below a painted cross? She was deeply attuned to this yearning! This thirst is not simply about self sustenance and refreshment it is also about Christ's thirst for justice, peace, compassion and loves where there is a lack of it. Lent is the time of our lives where we are most especially called to reflect on our own lives and ask ourselves, how much do we thirst for an intimate relationship with our loving Jesus who is just waiting for us to respond to His love? It is the time that we must deeply ponder how much do we thirst for a life that is life-giving to others?

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: Perhaps it is not after all so difficult for a man to part with his possessions, but it is certainly most difficult for him to part with himself. To renounce what one has is a minor thing; but to renounce what one is, that is asking a lot" -- *St. Gregory, Homilies on the Gospels.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY: "Father, you guide your people with kindness and govern us with love. We pray this day that you give the spirit of wisdom to those you have called to lead your Church. May the growth of your people in holiness be the eternal joy of our shepherds. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – Listen to a different type of music today. Listen to Gregorian <http://www.schuyesmans.be/gregoriaans/EN/ENnet.htm> or Anglican Chant <http://chantblog.blogspot.com/2009/08/anglican-chant-second-installment.html> in your car and at home. Enjoy this gift to the church and experience the roots of all music but more important listen to how profound it is when Psalms which are lyrics are put to music. Hear the grandeur, beauty and majesty of God!

Fri	am: 88	Isaiah 29:13-23,	Hebrews 12:5-16	Mark 12:28-34
Mar 12	pm: 91, 92			

LENT III: St. Porphyry (Porphorius), Bishop and martyr, 421,

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: According to tradition, he was known as a noble of Baniyas, who became a bishop most charitable and caring for the poor. He visited those in prison because of their debts and paid off their obligations. When the era of persecution started, it was called in every place to worship the idols. The Saint heard that the prince was passing by, he stood in front of his house and shouted in his face, saying: "I am Christian." After many failed trials from the prince to dissuade him on changing his faith, the prince ordered his neck to be cut off.

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: The readings today and the saint of the day come from the Coptic Church who are observing the fifth week of the Great Fast. The Copts have seasons of fasting matched by no other Christian community. Out of the 365 days of the year, Copts fast for over 210 days. During fasting, no animal products (meat, poultry, fish, milk, eggs, butter, etc.) are allowed. Moreover, no food or drink whatsoever may be taken between sunrise and sunset. These strict fasting rules are usually relaxed by priests on an individual basis to accommodate for illness or weakness. Lent, known as "*the Great Fast*", is largely observed by all Copts. It starts with a pre-Lent fast of one week, followed by a 40-day fast commemorating Christ's fasting on the mountain, followed by the Holy week, the most sacred week (called Pascha). Verse 7 of the Epistle to the Hebrews states: *Endure hardship as discipline.* Fasting on Fridays is an ancient

discipline of the church and one that is a challenge for those of us in the West. Again, it is helpful to look to the fruits of the Christian East to learn and take example of how to live into the Spirit of the Scripture and the tradition.

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: We tend to think of fasting as going without food. But we can fast from anything. If we love music and decide to miss a concert in order to spend time with God that is fasting. It is helpful to think of the parallel of human friendship. When friends need to be together, they will cancel all other activities in order to make that possible. There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have cancelled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority. – *Dr. J.I.Packer.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY: O Lord save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance, granting to Thy People victory over all their enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross, preserving Thy Kingdom. Amen

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – Pursue the opportunity to fast today. During the mealtimes, seek to join others in prayer and bible study and use the funds that would have been spent on food collectively for relief in Haiti or Chile.

Sat	am: 87, 90	Hosea 6:1-6	1 Cor 10:1-13	Luke 18:9-14
Mar 13	pm: 136			

LENT III – *St. Gerard, Bishop of Mayo (668)*

LITURGICAL THEME FOR THE DAY: St. Gerald Bishop of Mayo, was an English monk who died on this day in who came to Ireland after the Synod of Whitby and settled in Innisboffin, in 668. Gerald's circumstances remind us of today's church as dissensions arose, after a time, between the Irish and the English monks.

St. Colman the Abbot decided to found a separate monastery for the thirty English monks so that they may have safe practice of the faith given the difference between the Celtic and Saxon expressions of the faith. There arose the Abbey of Mayo of which St. Bede wrote " *This monastery occupied by English monks contained an exemplary body who gathered there from England, and lived after the manner of the church fathers.*

MEDITATION OF THE DAY: In today's Gospel familiar Jesus tells the story of two people praying in the temple. One is a tax collector and the other is a Pharisee. The Pharisee exalts himself and the tax collector humbles himself. Jesus is very clear about how he

sees these two dispositions teaching that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Luke uses this parable because his invitation and challenge in today's gospel is for us to consider our own "righteousness." Perhaps another way to think about this is by understanding Luke's challenge by reflecting on the "right" rather than "righteousness." Most of us would probably say we aren't righteous but are there times in our lives in which we feel that we are right? Are we right for rights sake or are we right at the expense of insuring another is wrong and demeaned. Something to think about!

ANCIENT WISDOM/PRESENT GRACE: "God descends to the humble as waters flow down from the hills into the valleys". – St. Tikhon

PRAYER OF THE DAY: Father of all that is right and good, in you is found no shadow of malice, but only the fullness of life and limitless truth. Open our heart to the voice of Your Word and free us from the self righteousness. Restore us to your grace that we may look upon your Son who calls us to repentance and a change of heart, for he lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. **Amen**

LENTEN DISCIPLINE – Sit in the Church for 30 minutes of quiet prayer. Just sit there affirming your belief in God's presence with you and of God's love for you. Let it be a prayer of affirmation. Don't ask for anything!