

We Respond

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) 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.

Or

When I prove my holiness among you, I will gather you from all the foreign lands; and I will pour clean water upon you and cleanse you from all your impurities, and I will give you a new spirit, says the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 102)

ANTIPHON: The Lord is kind and merciful.

RESPONSE: The Lord is kind and merciful.

LECTOR: 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.**

LECTOR: 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.**

LECTOR: 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.**

LECTOR: 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.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ! Repent, says the Lord; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) 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.

TODAY'S READINGS Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

NEXT WEEK (4th Sunday Lent, Year C) Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 33; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

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Bearing fruit in our lives



You never get a second chance to make a first impression. I saw these words on a poster in an employment agency I blessed. Yes, so often we judge others, based on first impressions. Once formed, first impressions can be difficult to let go, in order for us to give someone another chance or see them anew. It's not easy to change our opinions or judgements.

Thankfully, God doesn't relate to us in this way. God is "compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy," and offers us many chances and opportunities to change, and to free ourselves from whatever weighs us down or prevents us from living as people of love committed to Christ and His Kingdom. This week's gospel parable illustrates this truth perfectly.

A fig tree requires the right conditions to produce fruit. The tree in the parable remains fruitless after three years. The vineyard owner wants the gardener to cut it down because it's taking up ground that could be put to better use. The hope-filled gardener appeals to the owner to leave it for another year, during which time he will "dig round it and manure it." Just as the gardener is patient with the fig tree, so God is patient with us, and gives us many chances to bear fruit in our lives.

The challenge is not to waste the opportunities given to us. We must repent. Jesus warns the people: "Unless you repent, you will all perish." Repentance is a central

23 March 2025 3rd Sunday Lent, Year C
demand of the Good News, and Jesus begins his mission to proclaim the Kingdom with: "Repent and believe the Good news." (Mk 1:15).

Repentance is not focussed on the past, but the future. It's a decision to turn away from where we are and move towards God. To turn away from the darkness in our lives and journey towards the light. To completely change our direction and joyously 'come home' to God. Repentance calls us to leave behind the past and all that has been, and to open our minds and hearts to the person God wants us to be. God's grace will bring us to newness of life.

Sadly, a reluctance to believe that God really loves us, no matter what we've done or where we've been in life, often hinders our willingness to repent and change direction. All too often, our understanding of God is engulfed by fear and anxiety, which trap and bind us from reaching out to God with faith, trust and confidence.

God never gives up on us. Instead, God continually reaches out to us, helping us to become the people that God yearns for us to be. Let's take heart this Lenten season, that God who is compassion and love, is waiting patiently for us, and will transform our repentant hearts, so that the vineyard of our lives will bear abundant fruit.

Damian Coleridge

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