

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

March 7, 2010

3rd Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)



Gospel reading: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 13:1-9 *[To be read aloud]*

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.* Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them do you think they were guiltier than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

**The slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate is unknown outside Luke; but from what is known about Pilate from the Jewish historian Josephus, such a slaughter would be in keeping with the character of Pilate.*

Brief commentary:

At the time these events took place, people believed that disaster and suffering represented punishment from God for sins. Today's reading addresses this issue of the relationship between sin and tragedy. Jesus points out that those who suffered and died were no greater sinners than the others. He does not elaborate on this complaint but uses it to highlight the importance of conversion. Repentance is the only way to avoid spiritual death. He goes on to tell the parable of the fig tree. The parable tells of God's patience in waiting for us to give fruit. God's desire is not punishment, but mercy. The time may be extended for us as for the fig tree, but eventually we will have to answer for our fruitlessness.

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- Luke uses the narration of these events to provide a context for Jesus' call to repentance and conversion.
- The parable of the barren fig tree presents a story about the continuing patience of God with those who have not yet given evidence of their repentance.
- Lent is a time to call to mind one's sins and the sins of one's community, nation, and Church.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. Do you see your conversion as only related to God? Do you have any responsibility toward the society in which you live?
2. Are you waiting for another chance or is this the moment to change? What may need to be changed in your life?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 160; 535; 545-546; 1430-1431.