



Third Sunday of Lent † Sunday 24th March 2019

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments, Penitents and Wanderers
Keynote: We must change our ways to walk faithfully with God

Book of Exodus 3: 1-8, 13-15

With curiosity as Moses approaches the burning bush, he is instructed ‘*Come no nearer. Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ Moses learns that he is to lead the people from slavery and the hardships in Egypt ‘*and bring them to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.*’ Moses, enquires whom shall he say has sent him, and the Lord God replies: ‘**I AM WHO AM...** *this is what you must say to the Sons of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.*’ This name of God is rich in significance, for God will always be at hand to save his people: ‘*This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.*’ The eternal, ever faithful and merciful God is present in our lives too, now with us on our journey of faith. Even here we can take off our shoes for we too stand on holy ground.

Responsorial Psalm 102 (103) – A song of thanksgiving to God for creation

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 10: 1-6, 10-12

Paul writing to his young church at Corinth reminds them of the events of the first exodus journey. They would have recognised the parallels between baptism and the Eucharist when Paul wrote: ‘*Our fathers were all guided by a cloud... they passed through the sea... they were all baptised... in this sea... ate the same spiritual food, since they all drank from the spiritual rock... and that rock was Christ.*’ Paul relates how during the exodus the people of Israel pursued by the soldiers of the Pharaoh were saved by God; then suffering from thirst and starvation in the wilderness God again saved them leading Moses to find water in the rock and sending the quails and manna from heaven to feed the people. Despite God’s saving power the Israelites were ungrateful, and worshipped golden idols made by their own hands. ‘*These things happened as a warning for us,*’ says the Apostle ‘*we are not to lust for forbidden things... the one who thinks it safe must be careful not to fall.*’ So we are not to be complacent, but to be on our guard and renew our personal fidelity to the gospel we have each of us received.

Gospel according to Luke 13: 1-9

When the news reaches Jesus about the ruthless way in which the Roman Governor Pilate had treated the Galileans ‘*whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*’ Jesus uses this event to call for a change of heart among those listening. ‘*Do you suppose,*’ he asks ‘*that those Galileans who suffered were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.*’ The parable of the fig tree that fails to give fruit year after year is also a forceful image. Jesus seems to be saying to each of us through the voice of the farmer, ‘*leave it one more year, and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you may cut it down.*’ The call to repent, to make a complete change of heart, is at the very centre of the gospel preached by Jesus, and is central to our journey with Christ through this season of Lent.

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Note: Readings Year A to be used when the Scrutiny of the Elect is celebrated