

Homily of Third Sunday of Lent Year C, 2022

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15; Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

The first reading tells us about the call of Moses. Moses had fled from Egypt to Midian. There, he was tending the flock of his father-in-law. While in the region of Mount Horeb he was called by God in an extraordinary way. Moses saw a fire flaming out of a bush, but the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. Moses decided to go and see why the bush was not burned. When Moses came near, God called him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, 'I am here.' God said, 'Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. ...' God, I AM, then, gave Moses the mission to go and get the Israelites out of Egypt.

God said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and I have heard their cry of complaint ... I know well what they are suffering." We need not wait for God to call us in the extraordinary way he called Moses. The Spirit of God may be ministering to our heart and sending us to a mission to free someone who is in affliction. Our excuses and reluctance are the 'sandals' on our feet. Some of us are wearing really oversized and heavy 'sandals' that prevent us from lifting our feet and move to help those who need our help. When the Spirit of God minister's such call in our hearts, let us not reject the call. Let us, rather, pray for the grace to carry out God's command. St. Bernardine of Siena writes, "This is a general rule that applies to a rational creature. Whenever divine grace selects someone to serve a particular grace, or some especially favored position, all the gifts for his state are given to that person, and enriches him abundantly." Simply put, when God gives us a mission, he gives us the grace. God says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 2:9).

'Sandals' on our feet are our sins and weaknesses that prevent us from coming close to God. During the Lenten journey, we are invited to remove them. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great opportunity. "Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place? The clean of hand and pure of heart, who has not given his soul to useless things, what is vain. He will receive blessings from the Lord, and justice from his saving God" (Psalm 24:3-5).

The Gospel reminds us that although we are sinners and unworthy, yet God gives us opportunities to return to him, or opportunities to become what he wants us to be, or opportunities for greater heights, or opportunities for progress, or opportunities to break new grounds, or opportunities to bear fruits. Let us not waste such opportunities because such opportunities are not available all the time. A proverb says, "Make hay while the sun shines."

Today's gospel is also a reminder that we need to be patient with ourselves and with one another and support one another in every way possible. Someone writes, "Be patient with slow growers, late bloomers, and those unseeing." Barbara Lee wrote a book she titled, "God Isn't Finished with me Yet," where she encourages us that God does meet us with unexpected grace where we do not foresee it, and when we do not give up. There are many testimonies of eleventh hour blessing or last minute blessing. We read in the parable of Workers in the Vineyard: "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too'" (Matthew 20:6-7). The workers received eleventh hour blessing because they did not despair and did not give up.

Lastly, St. Paul warns us in the second reading, "Whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). There is the danger of fall in any area of life including spiritual life because of being carried away by overconfidence, pride of successes and achievement, and the mistaken comfort and feeling of "I have arrived" or the misjudgment of "I know it all."

We are challenged with various invitations on this third week of Lent. Some of us are invited to remove the oversized and heavy 'sandals' on our feet in order to come nearer to God, or move to help those in need, or make progress in our undertaking. Some of us are invited not to despair or give up, but wait for the eleventh hour blessing. Some of us are warned to take care not to fall.

Do you find yourself in any of the invitations?

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