

Homily of Third Sunday of Lent, Year C, 2025

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 is 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, then, gave Moses the mission to go and get the Israelites out of Egypt.

The hymn, “Holy Ground,” comes to mind:

*This is holy ground
We're standing on holy ground
For the Lord is present
And where He is is holy
This is holy ground
We're standing on holy ground
For the Lord is present
And where He is is holy*

It is important to remind ourselves that the Catholic Church teaches that the burning bush experience gives us a good understanding of the dogma of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As the bush burned without being consumed by fire, so Mary conceived Jesus without losing her virginity.

We need not wait for God to call us in an extraordinary way as he called Moses. The Spirit of God may be ministering to our hearts and sending us on a mission to free someone in an affliction or to rescue a situation or to perform a good work. 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 to doing what God wants us to do.

When the Spirit of God ministers a call in our hearts, let us not reject the call. Let us, rather, pray for the grace we need. 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 enrich 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).

The ‘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 those ‘sandals.’ The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great opportunity. Further, we are invited to reconcile and make peace with one another. Jesus warns us in the gospel not to delay to return to God. We are old enough to die as soon as we are conceived in our mother’s womb. Everyone is only a step away from death. Jesus reminds us that death can be very

sudden like those killed when the Tower of Siloam fell on them. St. Paul writes in the second reading, “These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us ... Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall” (1 Corinthians 10:11-12).

The gospel reminds us that although we are sinners and unworthy, yet God gives us opportunities to return to him, or to become what he wants us to become, or to make progress, or rise to greater heights, or to break new grounds, or to bear fruits. Let us not waste such opportunities because some missed opportunities are rare to come by. A proverb says, “Make hay while the sun shines.”

The 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.” St. Paul advises us, “We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up” (Romans 15:1-2). 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.

We are challenged with various invitations on this third week of Lent. Some of us are invited to remove oversized and heavy ‘sandals’ in order to repent from sin and come nearer to God. Some of us are encouraged to accept God’s invitation to do good. Some of us are challenged to rise to greater height. Some of us are invited not to despair or give up. Some of us are encouraged to be patient with ourselves and with others. Some of us are warned not to be overconfident lest we fall. Do you find yourself in any of the invitations?

God said to Moses, “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.” O God, hear our cry of complaint and save us as you saved your people. Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP