

LENT 3 – 2022
Exodus 3:1-8; 13-15
1Cor 10:1-6; 10-12
Lk 13:1-9

Why do the innocent suffer while the villains appear to have a charmed life? If we don't have a relationship with God then the answer is that 'life sucks.' If we do have a relationship with God, the answer is the one given to Moses, that God is with us during our sufferings.

Jews believed that having a charmed life was a sign of God's blessings, while trouble and strife are God's punishment for sin. The argument is that if we have a peaceful life why should we repent when clearly God is happy with us?

Jesus responded to this type of thinking by asking his hearers whether some Galileans who had recently been massacred by the human action of Pontius Pilate, or whether those who died accidentally when a tower fell on them in Siloam, were more sinful than anyone else. Jesus says that tragedy is not a measure of a person's sinfulness and need for repentance. Those living a tranquil life also need to repent because God's judgement *will* take place. If that judgement is delayed as in the case of Pharaoh and the Children of Israel and in the case of the fig tree that bore no fruit, that is a sign of God's mercy, not his approval of any sins that have been committed.

Those whose lives are tranquil and those whose lives are tumultuous are all sinners and need to change direction in their lives before God's final judgement is delivered.

St Paul accused the Corinthian Christians of being slack, complacent and arrogant in their Christian lives. He accused them of playing fast and loose with the faith because there was a significant gap between what he and others had taught them, and how they lived. The gap between these two things would determine how God would judge them.

The temptation for God's people to 'go with the flow' of the secular world has always been present for God's people. When the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land many of them worshipped the pagan gods of the surrounding nations and at other times were very selective about which of God's laws they would follow. This is why they ended up in exile in Babylon and why Jesus cleansed the Temple. God's laws and teaching of the Church are not gentle suggestions but standards that are meant to be kept by the whole Church.

Many of us have experienced the disruption of the Anglican Church where each diocese and each Province had its own version of what Scripture teaches and is to be believed. The same disruptions are taking place in the Catholic Church and this has raised the ire of Cardinal Pell who last week raised deep concerns about the German Church's attempts to write its own version of the Catholic Faith. The Cardinal said, "The Catholic Church is not a loose federation where different national synods or gatherings and prominent leaders are able to reject essential elements of the Apostolic Tradition and remain undisturbed." Pell may be addressing the German issue, but he is also firing a warning shot over the upcoming Australian Plenary Council's bows because there are vocal elements in this country that

share the same views as the Germans. He says that what is going on in Germany and to some degree other places, is a rupture, not compatible with Scripture or what the Church has received and believed throughout its existence. He says that the Church must be inclusive because Jesus is inclusive. Jesus welcomed and mixed with sinners, but he called us to change direction in our lives, let go of the moral values of the world and embrace those of God's Kingdom.

As we travel further into Lent, we must pray for the Church that we may remain faithful to the Truth that will lead us to the heavenly banquet.

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