

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Lent. Year.C. 19/20 March 2022.

As a believer in our freedom to choose and to be responsible for the choices we make, I acknowledge that whatever freedom we do have is limited. Certainly, by the choices we've made we have input into, and responsibility for, some climate disasters, but when floods, earthquakes, droughts, diseases and the like finally hit us there's often very little that we can do about them except try to get through them. When it comes to human violence and massacres, we have more direct input and so much more responsibility. Here again though, when it comes to revolutions, wars and vicious crimes often common folk like us feel powerless to prevent them and can only try to endure them and survive in one piece.

In Jesus lifetime, when the tower of Siloam fell and killed 18 people, it may have been because it was badly built and poorly maintained, or perhaps it was brought down by an earth tremor, a common occurrence in Israel. We simply don't know for sure. What we do know is that this deadly disaster was used by Jesus as a teaching point to help people understand that bad things do happen to innocent people, not just the wicked. Likewise, the massacre by Pontus Pilate of the Galileans who were going about their worship of God was't because they were worse sinners than others. The tower fell taking the good and the guilty alike. Pilate's orders cut down the sinful and the pure without discrimination.

Whatever the cause, be it by nature, human fallibly or by choosing power, malice and greed, we are all mortal beings and our time on this earth is limited by our death date, however this moment comes to us. Of course,

all of us do what we can to put this date off, to protect and save ourselves and others, but come for all of us our end on this earth most surely will.

The fig tree in the parable is you and me, individually and as a people. Each day we're here by gift of God who has given us life and who sustains us in our living. What fruit, then, are we producing that gives meaning to our days, offering love, hope and joy to others while we are here? Or, are we just sitting on good soil, taking up scarce resources while offering others nothing? These are the questions Jesus asks us to consider when we feel the unstoppable forces of nature, when we see the results of human frailty and error at work and when we witness, time and time again, wars, hatred, violence and the heartlessness of humankind. Of course, the man in the parable who looked after the orchard is Jesus. Even now He's the one who is always fighting for us to be given more time, the one who's working to nourish and tend to us so that we can bear fruit and not be cut down as useless waste.

As the gardeners amongst us know, your plant has to co-operate and welcome the tending you're giving it or even your patience with it will eventually run out. Likewise, we're called to work along side Jesus, our gardener from God, so that in ways be they big or small we can offer our gifts to life and make meaning out of living. In this partnership we certainly do have the freedom to make good choices, so that the gift to us of the Gardener Himself in this Eucharist will buy us not only time, but enough time to bear through us good fruit that will endure, even into eternal life.