

'CULTIVATING OUR FAITH'

3rd Sunday Lent Year C – 24th March 2019

IN THE LIGHT OF:

- several groups of parish children celebrating the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* for the first time this March in our parish
- the *Year Four Mass* last Friday
- the opportunity offered in our parish Lenten sheet to all parishioners to be part of yesterday's *prayer day at Santa Teresa Spirituality Centre, Ormiston*
- our parish sausage sizzle this weekend after all Masses to celebrate our recent parish feast day of *St Joseph* on the 19th
- our *Lenten discussion groups*
- what has been happening in *our own lives*
- our prayers for the people of *Christchurch* and *other urgent needs overseas*
- our prayers for those in the path of *Cyclones Trevor* and *Veronica*

let us approach today's reading.

WE HEAR OF THREE SECTIONS IN TODAY'S GOSPEL

We hear today of **three** sections –

two tragedies followed by **one parable** of mercy and hope.

TWO TRAGEDIES

The Gospel of Luke today tells us of **the Galileans killed by Pilate**, and the **18 people killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed upon them**.

The first tragedy example is of **Repression, Murder and Disrespect for Religious Belief**. We think of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, northern Nigeria and other parts of the world.

We remember already this year about:

- the recent **Christchurch massacre** in New Zealand in March 2019
- the church massacre in the southern **Philippines**

The second tragedy example is the collapse of the tower upon people

– *what was the cause of the tower's collapse?*

Was it poor building design, poor building construction, lack of maintenance?
we are not told, but innocent people died.

We remember and pray already this year for those suffering from:

- the **Ethiopian Airline disaster**
- the **flash floods and mudslides** in Papua in eastern Indonesia
- the **cyclones and rain depression** in northern Queensland, and now the **cyclones Trevor and Veronica** in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia
- the **ongoing droughts** in many parts of Australia,
- the **recent floods** following Cyclone Idai in three countries in Africa
- the **recent drownings** after a ferry near Mosul in Iraq

was carrying five times the ferry capacity for people

These events affect all of us.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 13:1-9

Let us read the Gospel for ourselves.

'At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them,

'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them —do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

Then he told this parable:

'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."'

INSIGHTS ON THE PARABLE

This week another parish group reflected on the weekly Gospel.

Different viewpoints shared included

- not to give up on people
- how we manage our expectations and allowing people to make their own choices.
- the parable speaks of one year, but God's time is more expansive.
- Will the vineyard owner learn from the patience of the gardener?
- 'Repent' in the sense of calling out someone's behaviour, not just being tolerant
- Repenting in love
- Repent in the sense of change and our personal responsibility
- Change not as reacting, but responding to the opportunity
- Change, not repeating something wrong done to us, stopping it here and now, rather than its continuing to perpetrate.
- The symbol of manure, being attentive to cultivation and accompanying someone
- We don't always see the fruit.
- Repenting by encouraging kindness. How does our leadership cultivate and support people to grow? Recognizing the trauma of survivors and responders.

FURTHER GOSPEL DETAILS

Let us look at the Gospel again.

There is a **rural and urban dimension**.

We know in Australia that we need to hold both in healthy balance.

RURAL - Jesus is a Galilean.

URBAN - The tower of Siloam was in the city of Jerusalem, the centre of their faith.

Rural and Urban tragedies with reference to Galilee and Jerusalem.

When tragedies happen to some, they happen to all of us.

In both cases, all are called to repent, to reform.

The scripture scholar Joseph Fitzmyer SJ tells us:

The words '*more guilty*' concerning the deaths, literally translates as '*were debtors beyond all who*', reflective of the Aramaic sense of debtor.

The question in the parable of the fig tree,

'Why should it even use up the soil?' is literally translated as

'Why should it waste even the earth?'

Whether the **terror of war and conflict**,

or **being in debt to wastage**,

or people who might be **unjust in business transactions and work**,

it affects us.

PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE IS A PARABLE OF MERCY

The parable of the fig-tree is a **parable of mercy**, giving one more year, one more **opportunity** to turn around this **wastage** of the soil.

The parable comes after the wastage of people's lives

in **conflict** (Galilean lives) and **everyday life** (collapse of the tower of Siloam).

RECENT CULTIVATION – WE HAVE CULTIVATED OUR FAITH

- through yesterday's retreat day at [Santa Teresa Spirituality Centre, Ormiston](#),
- through families accompanying children in the Sacrament of Reconciliation,
- through praying for others in the past fortnight
 - in both types of disasters referenced in the Gospel, for example, the terrorist crimes in Christchurch and cyclones and floods in Australia and overseas
- through parish celebration of school religious education in last Friday's Year 4 Mass, and the week before with Year 3 Mass.
- through taking the time to stay after Masses this weekend to meet parish members at the sausage sizzle
- through Lenten group discussions
- through our personal prayer during the week
- through choices made in our working and social lives
- through bringing the happenings and thoughts and feelings before God in the past week

- through our local prayers for St Vincent de Paul ministry, and South Sudan and Blackall/Tambo
- through Friday evening's Stations of the Cross
- through the recent Bridgeman House Mass at St John Fisher College
- through St Joseph's School spending the whole school day on the Feast of St Joseph in a time of reflection and Indigenous learning
- and through many other ways in our lives

QUEENSLAND BISHOPS & CATHOLIC INDIGENOUS ELDERS

In a different way, last Tuesday the Queensland Bishops at their annual March meeting reinstated annual state consultations between Bishops and Catholic Indigenous leaders.

At last Sunday's 9am parish Mass we as a community, prayed over Aunty Cynthia Rowan and Uncle David Miller, who would be part of that delegation.

Let us continue our journey of Lent, knowing that God will continue to surprise us.

Let us journey together as a family in prayer.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032419-yearc.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook24032019>]

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