

Victims need repentance too

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING



By Father Paul Turner

THE READINGS you hear at Mass the next three weeks may be different from the ones you read in this column. On weeks three, four, and five of Lent we celebrate the scrutinies with the catechumens, which permit another choice of readings. Scrutinies are prayers the Church offers to God to remove all temptation from the lives of the catechumens, to better prepare them for baptism at the Easter Vigil. From ancient times we have celebrated scrutinies with the readings from John's Gospel about the woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. If you happen to attend Mass next weekend where the community is preparing catechumens for Easter, you'll hear those alternate readings. The rest of the Church will follow the cycle of readings from Luke's Gospel, which we treat in this column.

Next year, we'll all have the same readings, whether or not you celebrate the Scrutinies. How's that for advance notice?

Don't sit too comfortably. Advance notice is just what this Gospel criticizes. You may think you have all the time in the world. Think again.

We meet Jesus today on his journey to Jerusalem. In the middle of Luke's Gospel (9:51) Jesus "sets his face" to go to Jerusalem. As the shadow of the cross stretches out to meet him on the road, the topics of his discourse become more and more severe.

Two bizarre incidents set this passage in motion. Pilate mingled the blood of some Galileans with their own sacrifices; a falling tower in Siloam killed eighteen bystanders. The crowd wonders what sin these people committed to bring such calamity on them.

Although no other historical source reports this particular incident about Pilate, it fits with other evidence that this man sought quick violent solutions to his problems.

The two incidents provide a meditation on being a victim. If someone hurts you with evil intent, or if some awful accident befalls you, how can you explain it? A beloved friend is senselessly and unexplainably killed at his home. A tragic car crash claims the lives of young people. Is the victim innocent? Or do victims somehow bring such terror on themselves?

Jesus gives a two-part answer. First, he sees no relationship between sin and victimhood. The measure of your offenses does not command the measure of your sorrow. Second, you might want to repent anyway. You never know what trouble the day may bring.

THE PARABLE of the fig tree further explains that God is patient. If a fig tree bears no fruit, God will give it another chance.

These stories carry deeper significance because Jesus is drawing so near to his cross. He is the innocent victim, and his best followers remain imperfect. But God's patience will await their repentance.

We hear this Gospel during Lent because it calls us to conversion as well. What will make us change our ways? An accident? A deliberate attack by a malefactor? Or the slow realization that the sinful life can be made pure?

Victims are no more sinful than the rest. But all need repentance.

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City.

Daily Scripture Readings

Second Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 12

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Psalms 27:1, 7-9, 13-14

Philippians 3:17 - 4:1

Luke 9:28b-36

Monday, March 13

Daniel 9:4b-10

Psalms 79:8-9, 11-13

Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 14

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23

Matthew 23:1-12

Wednesday, March 15

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalms 31:5-6, 14-16

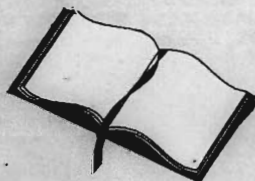
Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday, March 16

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalms 1:1-4, 6

Luke 16:5-6, 14-16



Friday, March 17

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28

Psalms 105:16-21

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Saturday, March 18

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Third Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 19

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-18

Psalms 103:1-4, 6-8, 11

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9