

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

3rd Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 24th, 2019

Be on Fire with the Love of Christ

Written by Angie Windnagle

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9



Growing up in the northern Midwest, we had long, unforgiving winters. Spring meant hope of warmth and the great thaw from a long cold winter. It was filled with melting snow, a continual reminder of what was behind us. But once summer arrived, the memory of cold was gone. With long warm days, we spent our time outdoors and, at the cabin, often on the water by day and curled around a smoky campfire by night. The memory of winter was far behind us, and it seemed as if the heat of the July sun would last forever. But predictably, summer turned to fall, which brought us back to the frigid winter.

In some ways, I'm reminded of this ebb and flow of life each Lent. I feel as if the grace my soul felt the previous Easter was so abundant that it would simply last forever. But as my resolutions waned, my prayer became weak. I found myself back in need of the arid yet grace-filled time of journeying with Christ to the cross. Like a child, I forget too easily.

The second reading this weekend echoes this natural human response — we are a people of God who forget too easily. Experience often doesn't teach us well. The Israelites were given all they needed to remain steadfast on their journey, yet it wasn't enough. St. Paul reprimands them for this, offering us a warning. We are given more than manna. We are given literal bread from heaven and ought not take advantage of that. Even still, how often does God provide in abundance for all my needs, yet I become lukewarm and forget His faithfulness? How often do I leave the gifts and grace God has given me unstirred?

It's often easy to wish God would speak again as He did to Moses: loud, bright, big, impossible to miss. "What does God want for my life? How should I serve Him? Which way should I take? If only there was a big sign..." But what I find so striking is that Moses was impressed not with the blaze, but with the fact that it didn't consume the bush. He's intrigued that fire isn't acting like fire. It is made to consume all it touches. It is made to burn, to spread, and to ignite. Yet this fire seemed to be waiting for something.

We know the Old Testament prefigures the New Testament ... and the New Testament fulfills the Old. In other words, we can say we see figures or shapes of the New Testament in the Old. With this in mind, the fire Moses was exposed to takes on new meaning. Perhaps it was not burning up anything because it wasn't lit to burn — it was lit to point as a sign to who was to come.

The blaze was a prefigurement of Christ, who came to fulfill all that was promised and to set the world on fire with his word. Instead of looking to a sign of God's promise, we are now literally able to follow God's promise in the flesh.

In the Gospel, Christ offers us a parable urging us to make this Lent different. The lesson of the fig tree shows us that our cyclical human nature to forget to learn from the past has a limit. Our culture is reaching a dramatic clashing point as it struggles to seek freedoms and rights for all forms of individuals yet grossly [rejects freedoms and rights to those who are yet to be born](#).

As a child, I learned and grew and knew summer would eventually end. I could taste the winds of change signaling fall nearby. As Christians, we are called to learn and grow each Lent in the same way. We are called to realize every new day we are given could be our last. This Lent could be our last. Eventually, there will be no more days to tend to our souls like the fig tree. We will stand before our just judge. Our country will stand before our just judge. Will we be like the Israelites who were foolish, even though they were given all they needed? Or will we allow God to consume our souls for His glory, a far greater miracle than the bush Moses saw? Will we allow God to use our souls as burning bushes for our culture to wake up and seek repentance?

As we approach the coming final weeks of Lent, let's repent and start anew so we can be a light in our world, on fire with the love of Christ. Let's make use of extra confession times, Lenten missions or talks, extra holy hours, and times set aside for prayer. Let's give to the poor from our need, not our want. Let's fast in order to be strengthened. Let's pray for the grace to fan into fire a love strong enough to keep watch with Jesus as he enters into his Passion

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PRAYER

Awaken and enlighten us, my Lord,
that we might know and love the blessings
which You ever propose to us,
and that we might understand
that You have moved to bestow favors on us
and have remembered us.

Amen.

— *from the Prayers of St. John of the Cross*