

# Lent:

## Third Sunday of Lent

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### Preparation

#### Background for Scripture Readings

##### First Reading

- In the first reading from Exodus, Moses questions God's call.
- God's answer, "I AM who I AM" has lead believers to contemplate the meaning of God's reply to Moses.
- Today's passage shows that even in the moment of personal revelation, God remains a mystery.

##### Second Reading

- The reading from 1 Corinthians is Paul's meditation on the fate of the people who were delivered in the Exodus.
- Not all of the people who were freed remained faithful to God.
- Paul stresses that being delivered from sin through Baptism is not enough. We must continue to turn back to God when we have turned away.

##### Gospel

- Today's Gospel story was Jesus' answer to those who judged others through the theory of retribution.
- Humans cannot see enough to judge God's purpose in events.
- The parable illustrates God's patience concerning human sin.

### Breaking Open the Word

## Leader Instruction

### Catechist Reflection Guide for Third Sunday of Lent

**First Reading:** Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15—Moses and the burning bush.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8+11—The Lord is kind and merciful.

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12—God is not always pleased with his people.

**Gospel:** Luke 13:1-9—The fig tree.

#### **Invitation to prayer** (30 sec.)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Begin the session with the Sign of the Cross. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us.

#### **Listening for a word or phrase** to speak to your heart (3-4 min.)

Read the Gospel passage or the special phrase slowly and deliberately while the children are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they select their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

**For Ages 5-6:** Help children sound out the words "**I am a Jesus Tree.**" Have them look at the illustration and explain that in today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a man who wanted to cut down his tree because it was not growing fruit. Read Luke 13:6-9 from a children's Bible or tell it in your own words.

**For Ages 7-8:** Read aloud the words: "**I am a Jesus Tree.**" Have children look at the illustration and explain that in today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a man who wanted to cut down a tree because it was not growing fruit. Read Luke 13:6-9 from a children's Bible or tell it in your own words.

**For Ages 9-11 and Ages 12-14:** Read aloud Luke 13:6-9. Ask young people to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their word or phrase. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

#### **Loving God through his word** (3-5 min.)

**For Ages 5-6:** Talk about the story in light of children's experiences of trees or gardens. Ask them why someone would cut down a tree or take a plant out of a garden. Help them see that if a tree does not grow fruit or a plant does not blossom, it is not worth it to keep working at it. Call children's attention to the words and illustration on the handout and explain that we are Jesus' trees. Jesus wants us to grow fruit. We are growing fruit when people can see our good actions. Read the direction aloud and explain what children are to draw. Give some examples. (*when I am kind to my brothers and sisters; when I clean my room; when I do what my parent tells me to do*) Have children complete the drawing activity. Close with the prayer.

**For Ages 7-8:** Talk about the story in light of children's experiences of trees or gardens. Ask them why someone would cut down a tree or take a plant out of a garden. Help them see that if a tree does not grow fruit or a plant does not blossom, it is not worth it to keep working at it. Read aloud the text or have a good reader read aloud. Explain that Jesus and the Holy Spirit help us do good things. They show us how; when we do good things we can say we bear good fruit. Have children complete the drawing activity. Close with the prayer.

**For ages 9-11:** Ask young people to share their word or phrase. Give young people a short quiet time to

read the questions on the handout and think about their responses. Engage the large group in sharing their responses. In conclusion, talk about ways we might be like the gardener to others. (*forgiving; not coming back with an unkind comment when someone is unkind to us; being patient.*) Close with the prayer.

**For ages 12-14:** Ask young people to share their word or phrase. Engage the group in conversation about the meaning of the parable by using the questions on the handout. Close with the prayer.

**Living the Gospel** words through the week (3-5 min.)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.