**Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Lent(3/24/2019)**

Rev. Francis Kim

 A girl knelt in the confessional and said, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.” “What is it, lady?” Then, the girl said, “Father, I have committed the sin of vanity. Twice a day, I gaze at myself in the mirror and tell myself how beautiful I am.”

 The priest turned, took a good look at the girl and said, “My dear, I have good news. That isn’t a sin, it’s only a mistake.” Yes, sometimes, we make mistakes.

 We are now in the middle of Lent, the third week of Lent. Since the beginning of Lent, the readings for daily Masses have pleaded with us to turn away from sin. Over and over again, the prophets tells us to stop sinning.

 The prophet Isaiah says, “Turn from your sinful ways.” The prophet Ezekiel says, “You wicked man, turn away from all your sins.” And, the prophet Daniel tells us, “Stop rebelling against God’s commandments.”

 The prophets remind us that if we seek the Lord, God is full of compassion and ready to forgive us our sins. And again, through the liturgical readings today, we are called to continue to examine our hearts and to repent from our sins. Jesus emphasizes, “If you do not repent, you will all perish.”

 In the First Reading, God speaks to Moses from a burning bush. Moses is asked to take off his shoes as he approaches the holiness of God. At this moment, Moses is called to a new and holy life.

 Then, the Voice tells Moses that God is the same God who called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It means that God is the living God for all generations, all the nations, and all the people. God is very active to involve in His people’s lives.

 In fact, we are always on holy ground wherever we walk because our Lord walks with us. And, we also carry the burning bush, namely the fire of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. So, like Moses we are also called a new and holy life.

 And, in the Second Reading, Saint Paul calls the people of Corinth to change their ways. The city of Corinth was a ‘sinful city.’ So, Saint Paul told the people to stop sinning. But, they said, “No matter what we do, we have been baptized, so we are saved.”

 Then, they committed all kinds of sins. That’s why Paul wrote to the Corinthians to tell them they were wrong. He said, “You are Christians. Stop sinning.”

 In the Gospel, regarding repentance, Jesus tells the parable of the fig tree. Figs are a seasonal fruit. Each season, there is a new fruit of fig. Three years with no fruit, clearly the fig tree is dead and should be cut down. But, the gardener said, “Give the fig tree one more year.” During that year, the gardener promises to fertilize and water the tree, and to cultivate the soil.

 The gardener represents the Lord Jesus, and as we are Christians, each represents one fig tree. Each fig tree is expected to bear fruit that represents the good works and virtues of Christians. All of us should answer God’s calling to bear fruit.

 In the parable, the gardener pleads for more time to cultivate around it so that it might become fruitful. Like the gardener begged mercy and promised to nourish the tree, Jesus begs and promises that He will shine more grace upon us to bear good fruits.

 In this parable, we are reminded that Jesus Christ always gives us a second chance to repent and to bear fruit. Jesus says, “If the fig tree does not bear fruit after one more year, cut it down.” God wants us to repent, but time can run out. We are all given time and a second chance to enter into the kingdom of God.

 “Repent or perish.” “Produce fruit or be destroyed.” Unless each of us repents, we will perish. Let us bear fruit, or we will be cut down. Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, will help us and lead us to bear fruit.

 So, let us invite the Lord into our hearts to cultivate and to feed us. Then, we will be better enabled to bear the good fruit for the Kingdom of God: the fruit of compassion, the fruit of love, and the fruit of reconciliation.

 These are about to fertilize and water our lives, and to cultivate our souls. That is what Lent is about.

 God is using this Lenten Season to shower an abundance of grace upon us through Jesus Christ, so we will repent from our sins and bear much fruit with great joy.