

Homily – ACTS Mass

March 23, 2019

Lent is a time for deepening our faith. This holy season gives us an opportunity to look into our inner selves to see what we are truly like as members of the People of God.

The first reading describes a profound religious experience that transforms Moses, a fugitive hiding from the Egyptians, into the courageous leader who leads his people in the Exodus from Egypt. The burning bush is a pivotal encounter with the living God for him.

Religious experience is at the heart of faith. Some may have an extraordinary experience of God's presence. Others are powerfully touched by the Lord through ordinary events of life – the birth of a baby, a magnificent sunset. The burning bush reminds us that authentic religious faith is nourished by these experiences.

The second reading gives us a glimpse of Paul's frustration with the Corinthians, who vexed him by their incessant arguing and divisions. Such scandals were not confined to the Apostolic Age! They are still with us! They are part of authentic religion. True religion is not merely a self-improvement program. It is also the

“dark night of the soul,” a time of testing – as we are being tested these days by the sexual abuse crisis in the Church.

Today’s gospel reminds us that Jesus was not a hermit or an ascetic who fled to the desert to escape the world. Rather, he was deeply involved in the lives of people and in the events of daily life – including tragedies. This is also a key to authentic religion. Our religious faith necessarily bursts out of Sunday worship or an ACTS retreat to influence the whole week, our entire life. A living, vital faith must enliven every aspect of our lives and our society.

The parable of the fig tree reminds us that God is **impatient**, that the Lord seeks to discover good fruit, not merely pretty leaves. God is deeply passionate about his people. He wants results! At the same time, he is marvelously **patient** with us. He is the father who goes out each evening looking for his prodigal son. He is the gardener who gives us one more season, one more year for good results. He is the compassionate God who will not quench the smoldering wick or break the bruised reed.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us to be people of authentic faith! Help us to deepen our faith and live it at every moment.