

3rd Sunday of Lent



Today's readings speak of the Christian life as one of constant vigilance. Our tendency is to buy into it as if on the layaway plan; we make a down payment now and make the final installment sometime in the future. It's not over till it's over.

In the first reading, God speaks of his unrelenting resolve to free the Egyptian slaves. It also speaks of the demand for unrelenting commitment to this God. The Jewish word for bush, as in burning, sounds like Sinai. The burning bush is connected to the fire of God's appearance on Mt. Sinai. As Moses had to remove his sandals, Israel would have to sanctify itself to meet God. Israel had to constantly renew itself and not take the allegiance lightly. God reveals His name as "I am who am." This suggests that he is existence itself.

In the second reading, the Corinthian community was divided. Some thought that salvation was assured to all Christians. Others thought that Christianity was merely an intellectual process; that what one did with the body was irrelevant. Paul reminds them of Israel failing in their desert wandering. The community must stay awake so it does not fail. "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall."

In the Gospel, some Jewish authorities taught that God punishes and rewards in this life. One could conclude that in the absence of catastrophe, we are righteous. Jesus contradicts this idea by telling of the Galilean slaughter. The fall of the tower of Siloam was in anticipation of the fall of the towers of Jerusalem. Jesus' message of constant reform applied to the Church, and this meant learning from Israel's mistakes. Again, He counsels constant vigilance.