



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Reflections for 3rd Sunday in Lent
March 23, 2025
Sr. Susan Quaintance

Ex 3: 1-8a, 13-15
Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11
1Cor 10: 1-6, 10-12
Lk 13: 1-9

Being called by name is a precious gift. Most of us, I think, appreciate being called by name. It indicates that the person who is speaking has, first, made an effort to learn my name, and it signifies that that person sees me, not just some random person. And to take this a step further, there are differences in hearing my name, depending on who's speaking it. There's a discomfort when someone who I don't feel close to, or even like, presumes to call me a nickname or some other moniker that indicates intimacy. But, on the other hand, there's a particular pleasure that arises from hearing my name from some others; voice and tone might indicate excitement to see me, or forgiveness after I've done something wrong, or simply recognition of me – the whole me with all my gifts and foibles.

Now, you might be thinking, "Oh, I know: Sus is going to talk about the Exodus reading and Moses learning God's name." But no. However, that remarkable story did get me thinking about being called by name and how transformative it can be to hear my name, said with openness, acceptance, and love.

It connected me to the compassion of the gardener in the parable from Luke. I was really taken with that character – who understands the owner's concern about the toll that the fruitless tree is taking on the soil – but still asks for one more year to give it a little extra care, a little extra tenderness. As I imagine the continuation of the parable over the next twelve months, I can hear the gardener talking to the tree as he or she is carefully tending, examining, pruning: "Come on, tree. Do your thing. Be who you're meant to be. Grow some figs:" calling it by name, with openness to the tree's quirks, acceptance of its unique growing trajectory, love for the promise of life and beauty and nourishment it holds.

Of course the gardener's compassion is God's compassion. The same God who says to Moses, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well their suffering." The same God, of whom Benedict says in the Prologue, ". . . the Lord waits for us daily to translate into action . . . his holy teachings." The same God whose call brought each of us, somehow, to this monastery.

And this is the compassion that I am called to extend to others. I am to do my part in the tending of people with the care that might help them flourish and grow instead of what could contribute to their withering. I want, always, to be open to the possibility of conversion; my own and others'. Some days that is a tall order. But if God gives me time to repent, if the gardener gives the fig tree another year to grow, who am I to do otherwise?

Reflections for 3rd Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2025

Sr. Susan Quaintance

What can help is the voice of God – the one who calls me by my truest and deepest name – encouraging me, like the gardener in Luke. The one, who, as we sang in the psalm response, *is* kindness and mercy. When I imitate that, I do indeed, as the first verse of the psalm says, “bless God’s holy name.”