



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **ANGELUS** *Saint Peter's Square*

3rd Sunday of Lent, 24 March 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

The Gospel for this third Sunday of Lent (cf. Lk 13: 1-9) speaks to us about God's mercy and of our conversion. Jesus recounts the parable of the barren fig tree. A man has planted a fig tree in his vineyard, and with great confidence, each summer, he goes in search of its fruits, but he finds none because that tree is barren. Spurred by this disappointment which has recurred for at least three years, the man considers cutting down the fig tree in order to plant another. So he calls the field hand who is in the vineyard and tells him of his disappointment, ordering him to cut down the tree so as not to use up the ground needlessly. But the vinedresser asks the master to be patient and asks him for one more year during which the vinedresser himself would take special and delicate care of the fig tree, so as to stimulate its productivity. This is the parable. What does this parable symbolize? What do the characters in this parable symbolize?

The master represents God the Father and the vinedresser is the image of Jesus, while the fig tree is the symbol of an indifferent and insensitive humanity. Jesus intercedes with the Father in favour of humanity — and he always does so — and implores him to wait and to give it more time so that it may bring forth the fruits of love and justice. The fig tree that the master in the parable wants to uproot represents a sterile existence that is incapable of giving, incapable of doing good. It is the symbol of one who lives for himself, sated and calm, enjoying his own comforts, incapable of turning his gaze and his heart to those beside him who find themselves in conditions of suffering, poverty and hardship. This attitude of selfishness and spiritual barrenness, is compared to the vinedresser's great love for the fig tree. He asks the master to wait. He is patient, knows how to wait, and devotes his time and his work to it. He promises the master to take special care of that unfortunate tree.

And this vinedresser's likeness manifests the mercy of God who leaves us time for conversion. We all need to convert ourselves, to take a step forward; and God's patience and mercy accompanies us in this. Despite the barrenness that marks our lives at times, God is patient and offers us the

possibility to change and make progress on the path towards good. However, the deferment requested and received in expectation of the tree bearing fruit also indicates the urgency of conversion. The vinedresser tells the master: “Let it alone, sir, this year also” (v. 8). The possibility of conversion is not unlimited; thus, it is necessary to seize it immediately; otherwise it might be lost forever. This Lent, we can consider: what do I have to do to draw nearer to the Lord, to convert myself, to “cut out” those things that are not good? “No, no, I will wait for next Lent”. But will I be alive next Lent? Today, let us each think: what must I do before this mercy of God who awaits me and who always forgives? What must I do? We can have great trust in God’s mercy but without abusing it. We must not justify spiritual laziness, but increase our commitment to respond promptly to this mercy with heartfelt sincerity.

During the time of Lent, the Lord invites us to convert. Each of us must feel addressed by this call, and correct something in our lives, in our way of thinking, of behaving and of living our relationships with others. At the same time, we must imitate the patience of God who trusts in everyone’s ability to “rise again” and to continue the journey. God is Father and does not extinguish the weak flame, but rather, accompanies and cares for those who are weak so that they may gain strength and bring their contribution of love to the community. May the Virgin Mary help us to live these days of preparation for Easter as a time of spiritual renewal and trusting openness to the grace of God and his mercy.

After reciting the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, since 27 February, important talks have been taking place in Nicaragua aimed at solving the country’s grave social and political crisis. I accompany the initiative with prayer, and I encourage the parties to find a peaceful resolution for the good of all, as soon as possible.

Yesterday, in Tarragona, Spain, Mariano Mullerat i Soldevila was beatified. A young father and physician who died at 39 years of age. He took care of the physical and moral suffering of his brothers and sisters, bearing witness with his life and with martyrdom, to the primacy of charity and forgiveness; an example for us, who find it very hard to forgive, for all of us. May he intercede for us and help us walk the path of love and fraternity, despite our difficulties and tribulations. A round of applause for the new Blessed!

Today, we commemorate the *Day of Remembrance for Martyred Missionaries*. In 2018, many bishops, priests, religious sisters and lay faithful were subjected to violence across the world, while 40 missionaries were killed, almost double the figure for the previous year. Remembering this contemporary Calvary of brothers and sisters persecuted or killed for their faith in Jesus is a duty of gratitude for the entire Church, but also a catalyst to bear courageous witness to our faith and our hope in the One who, on the Cross, conquered hatred and violence once and for all, with his

love.

Let us pray for the many victims of the latest inhuman attacks that took place in Nigeria and Mali. May the Lord receive these victims, heal the injured, comfort the families and convert cruel hearts. Let us pray: "Hail Mary...".

I greet all of you, from Rome, from Italy and from different countries, in particular the pilgrims from Pola, Croatia, Coslada, Spain, and the community of the Pontifical French Seminary. I greet the faithful from Dogana, Carpi, Faenza, Castellammare di Stabia, the women's group joined together to face their particular illness, the Scouts from Campobasso, the confirmands from Cervarese Santa Croce, the young people from the profession of faith of Renate, Veduggio and Rastignano, students from the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Turin and Vercelli and those from the Santa Dorotea School of Montecchio, Emilia.

Tomorrow, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, I will go to Loreto to the House of the Virgin. I have chosen this place for the signing of the Apostolic Exhortation dedicated to young people. I ask for your prayers so that the "yes" of Mary may become the "yes" of many of us.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!