

Reflection Questions

- What fears keep you from completely opening yourself to Christ?
 - What do you risk by keeping Him shut out in some way?
- How has your journey through addiction recovery revealed the remarkable, radiant nature of God which cannot be defined or captured by identity?
- In what ways are you experiencing Christ in the sacraments throughout this season of Lent?

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

3rd Sunday of Lent



When Pope Benedict XVI was inaugurated as pope in 2005, his initial address drew from the wisdom of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, as he declared, “Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom?”

This is a common attitude and belief of those who enter into the way of recovery and the spiritual life of the Church. Modern culture depicts a relationship with God as being a zero-sum game—that as we allow God to draw closer to us, we lose what is at the core of our identity and character. This week’s Sunday mass readings capture the truth that God can work with us to make us more enhanced and radiant and therefore give life and light to the world.

Our first reading is one we are likely familiar with—God appears to Moses through fire flaming out of a bush. “As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed.” Moses gets closer to this remarkable sight and, as he does, God calls out to him by name.

This reading offers significant insight into the presence that God has in our journey out of the vortex of addiction. He calls each one of us by name. The third step invites us to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understand Him*. Like the burning bush, we can be fully assumed by God’s presence while neither being consumed nor experiencing destruction. As the first reading continues, we learn that God cannot be limited to a finite category or definition:

Moses said to God, “But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?”
God replied, “I am who am.”
Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.”

God knows our suffering and promises freedom from the captivity of addiction. He tells Moses that he will lead His people out of the desert and into a land flowing with milk and honey. He wants the same for us and has shown us a new way. However, our minds operate in a way that seek to simplify and contain the identity of God.

The closer we allow God to us, the more we radiate. Yet, when we get caught up in our own self-righteous behavior and thinking, our lives become consumed. We end up alone and lost. Lent is a season of change and repentance, offering an opportunity to let Christ enter fully into our lives.

Through disclosure of our own shortcomings and coming to believe that no human power can relieve us or our loved ones of addiction, we make room for the mystical presence of God to act within us. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Pope Benedict’s inaugural address reiterates this and concludes, “Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life.”