

3rd Sunday Lent (C)

First Eucharist

- What do you think would happen if you **only** ate ice cream, chocolate cake, potato chips, jam doughnuts & lollies every day?
- And then, you only drank Coke, & even brushed your teeth with it!?
- What do you think would happen?
- You probably wouldn't feel very well after awhile, would you?
- Why is that, do you think?
- Probably because they are not healthy foods & they make us feel *un*healthy when we eat too much of it.
- What are some healthy foods that we can eat that will help us feel healthy?
- And do other people in your life help you to eat these healthy foods - even when you sometimes don't want to?
- I ask you these questions about healthy & unhealthy foods because Jesus talked about something similar in today's Gospel story.
- In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples a story about a gardener.
- The story goes like this: An owner of some land wants a gardener to cut down a fig tree because it's not bearing any fruit.
- To "bear fruit" is a way of saying that a tree is meant to grow fruit on its branches – except this tree wasn't growing fruit & that's why the owner wanted to have it cut down.
- But the gardener says to the owner, "Let's give the tree some more time.
- During that time, I'll give it some extra special fertilizer, some healthy food & then we'll see how it does."
- Fertilizer, as you may know, is extra-healthy food for a tree.
- And the gardener wants to help the tree bear fruit by giving it some of that extra healthy food.
- When the owner hears the gardener's plan, he agrees to give the tree another year to bear fruit – to give it a second chance.
- The owner of the property is something like what people can be – impatient; not putting in much effort but expecting to get rewarded; giving up on projects when they may fail the first time & especially giving up on people when they don't perform the way we want them to do.
- And we do this with ourselves as well – we can give up & lose faith in ourselves when what we set out to do may fail the first time around.
- And in the story, the gardener is Jesus, who is wanting to help the tree to grow & bear fruit by giving it better food, but nourishing it to bring out the best it can offer.
- And, if we imagine that we are the tree in the story, then we might think about what some of that healthy food might be that God offers us.
- The most important thing the story is meant to say is that God does not give up on us, even if we or others give up on us.

- God could never give up on us because we are made in his likeness out of love for us that never ends, & there is nothing we can do to lose that love, but we are free to reject it.
- God never forces himself upon us.
- And even if we do reject it at times in our lives, God is always available to welcome us back & to embrace us in his love for us.
- And God want to nourish us with good foods so that we might bear fruit that reflects the nourishment we have taken in from God.
- For example, when God offers us love, wisdom, & patience as healthy things for us to receive, that helps us grow stronger deep within.
- Then we will have more of God's love, wisdom, & patience to share with others as compassion, care, resilience, hope & peace.
- The particular special nourishment that you receive today is the very life of God in the Eucharist so that we can grow in our deepest selves & become more like Jesus.
- Just like the tree in today's story is given healthier food so that it can grow its own food to share with the world, the same is true for us with God.
- The more of God's love, wisdom, & patience we receive, the more of God's love, wisdom, & patience we have to share – which is good for us & those around us.
- And how much the world needs to know & receive these from us.
- I pray that as you receive the Eucharist for the first time, you may always & increasingly be aware of God's great love for you, & that you may always grow in love for him so that you may witness to God's love for people by the way you touch other people's lives & the ways you can make a good difference for our world.