

**Third Sunday of Lent  
February 28, 2016**

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**I recently saw the movie, “The Choice”, based on the novel by Nicholas Sparks. When I go to see a movie, I always look for something in the movie that speaks to me about God or my faith, and the impact it might have on my life. As “The Choice” begins, the first few words are, “Pay attention, cause I’m about to tell you the secret of life, it’s all about choices. Every path you take leads to another choice. Some choices could change everything. Every moment of the rest of your life hangs on it.” Throughout the movie the characters make many everyday choices and one very significant choice; which is most likely why the title of the movie is “The Choice”.**

**Everyday we make choices, most of them we don’t give much thought to, we just do what we hope is right and best. Our readings today are about choices and also about paying attention, listening, and being patient.**

**In our first reading we encounter Moses as he is tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses eventually comes to Horeb, the mountain of God. I don’t know if it was common for Moses to see a bush burning on the mountain. What made him attentive this day, and curious, was the sight of a bush on fire yet not consumed. So he ventured closer to see the remarkable sight. Little did he know he was about to encounter God. God noticing that Moses had been attentive to the flames, calls out his name. “Moses, Moses!” “Here I am,” Moses replied.**

**God had been listening to the suffering of the Israelites and had a plan for Moses. As Moses listened to God, he discovered that God wanted him to bring the suffering Israelites out of Egypt. God told Moses to tell the people that I AM sent me to you. I AM, which means God is the God of the present, not a God who was only in the past, or waiting in the future, but a God who is; a God who is with us and present every moment of our life. Moses made the choice to do what God was asking him to do, knowing that I AM would be with him on the journey.**

**This encounter between Moses and God made me wonder how many times I might have**

missed an encounter with God because I wasn't attentive to what was right in front of my eyes. At times when we're preoccupied or distracted, we may walk right by a person who needs help, or miss a rainbow in the sky or a brilliant sunset. It's all about paying attention, isn't it? If we all tried just a little harder to live in the present moment during Lent, perhaps we would find ourselves walking on holy ground as Moses did.

We also heard the parable Jesus told his listeners about the barren fig tree. For three years it has produced no figs. What should the gardener do? Cut it down? Give it just a little longer?

Listen to this story:

A man brought home a little white box from the pet store. Inside was a talking centipede. The following Sunday, he asked the centipede, "Would you like to go to church with me today?" There was no response. After a few minutes, he repeated the question, "How about going to church with me and receiving blessings?" Again, he was met with silence.

Three minutes passed. He gave it one more try. This time he pressed his face against the centipede's house and shouted, "Hey, in there! Would you like to go to church with me and learn about God?" This time, a little voice arose from the box, "What's your hurry? I heard you the first time! I was putting on my shoes!"

Most of us don't like to wait, or to give a situation just a little longer. Sometimes we are not patient people. The gardener in the parable of the fig tree was patient and not in a hurry to cut down the tree. He was willing to do whatever it would take to bring the tree to fruition. He gave the tree a second chance. God is patient and willing to give us second, third, fourth or as many chances we may need to grow, to deepen our relationship, and follow. The invitation to "Come and see" is always extended to each of us as, it was to those Jesus first called to follow him.

This weekend is our ministry fair and we are all being asked to come to the Harrison Center right after mass to see how we can help All Saints Parish to continue to be a welcoming place for all, a community of diversity, and a place to share the gifts God has given each of us. Unlike the barren fig tree in today's parable, we have trees in the Harrison Center filled with fruits of the ministries and committees at all Saints. The ministry contact persons and committee heads are

**inviting you to come and see, ask questions, and make a choice to get involved in one of the many ministry opportunities we have here at All Saints. On Ash Wednesday we began our Lenten journey. Now is the time to get going and get involved. We are one body with many gifts to share.**

**Moses was attentive and listened to the voice of God and so must we. Listening is not easy. Pope Francis talks about listening in many of the daily reflections found in the booklet we are using as a parish this Lent. He says, "We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Only through respectful listening and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what God has sown in our lives."**

**I think when our lives get too busy, and we aren't taking time to listen to God, God tries a variety of ways to get our attention; because God is patient with us and persistent. God wants to be active in our lives, however, God has also given us free will, so the choice to listen is ours to make; because life is about choices.**

**It's the poor choices like the one made by those in charge to change the water source for the residents in Flint, Michigan. To let the situation continue for over a year was even a worst choice. There are many Flint, Michigan's around the world in countries where water is not safe to drink, or many miles away from the village. There are so many choices that have to be made to ensure clean fresh water for future generations.**

**Yes, some choices are easy to make and others we need to ponder. Our task is to be attentive and listen from within our heart to the voice of Jesus. Last week we heard the story of the transfiguration of Jesus. The voice from the cloud said, "Listen to him." Those words weren't meant only for Peter, James, and John. They continue to be alive and relevant for us this day. Try a little harder to listen to the voice of Jesus that is alive in your heart and come and see where God is inviting you to share your gifts.**

**Life is about choices. May God give you peace and patience to make the best ones. Amen!**