

Third Sunday of Lent

Year C

Gn 15:5-12, 17-18

Ps 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

Phil 3:17—4:1 or 3:20—4:1

Lk 9:28b-36

Donald X. Burt, O.S.A.

In the fifth century Saint Augustine gave the following warning to his people:

We know that the day of eternity is coming and it is good for us to know this. It is also good not to know exactly *when* it will come. This forces us to prepare for eternity by living a good life now. It is in our power *now* to decide whether our eternity will be in heaven or in hell. Right *now* is the time when we can determine what our eternity will be. God mercifully hides the moment when our earthly life will end but he even more mercifully delays its ending so that we can have more time *now* to prepare.

Commentary On Psalm 36/1, # 1

As we float down the twisting currents of this river that we call our life, one of our dreams is to have control over our future as the tides of time force us relentlessly towards that future. Despite all of our frantic paddling, we cannot make our little boat go back. The past is past, the present is streaming quickly by. Only the future lies ahead.

We would dearly love to have some magic rudder that could control the direction that our lives will take in the future but it so often seems that this is beyond our control. The currents of the river that carry us into that future seem to have a mind of their own. No matter what we want, it seems that most of what will happen to us is controlled by forces beyond us. For example:

- ... we fall in love and pray that we will be loved in return, but we cannot force that love;
- ... we find our love and pray that they will be with us always but sometimes the river's currents sweep them away from us. Their time for plunging into eternity is not our time;
- ... we try our hardest to stay healthy, only to be struck down by an unexpected illness;
- ... we try to make our mark in the world, only to find that others are not particularly interested in what we say or what we do.

The joyful fact of our lives is that, even though we cannot determine *these* times of our lives, we do have control over our eternity. The river of our lives has many uncontrollable twists and turns as it flows through time, but however it gets there (whether it is sooner or later) each of our lives plunges over the edge of time into an eternal life. Though we cannot determine when the end of our beginning and the beginning of our life without end will come, we can determine the quality of that eternal life. We can determine whether, at the end of our time, our lives will fall into the arms of Christ or plummet past him into that hellish solitariness that is an eternal life

without God.

The rules that control our destiny are simple: "We must love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves". If we just *try* to do that at every "now" that is given to us, we need not worry about what will happen to us at the end of our time. Christ has promised that, when we plunge over the great Falls of Death, he will catch us on the other side. Just as our virtuous loving in this life has drawn us towards God, so in eternity that same love will "glue" us to God forever.

But like the barren fig tree in today's gospel story, we cannot waste our the time left to us to bear the fruit of praiseworthy love that will insure our eternal happiness. Our end is coming and Jesus is waiting for us on the other side of death. Whether we will join him then is up to us *NOW!*