

A young girl brought her boyfriend home to meet her parents. The parents struggled to find any good qualities in the young man. At one point when they were alone with their daughter they expressed their concerns. “Dear he doesn’t seem like a very nice person.” “Mom” the daughter answered, “If he wasn’t nice why would he be doing 500 hours of community service?”

Now while it would be a stretch to say community service fits into the theme of our liturgy today, certainly our readings remind us not to be like the fig tree in Jesus’ parable. We are to produce good works. God did not create us to just take up space in this world. He wants more from us. He wants us to trust him, love him and to do good works for others.

As we heard in the psalm response today: The Lord is Kind and merciful. He is kind and merciful in many ways. One of those ways he is kind and merciful is in calling us to repentance and renewal. In the book of Revelation Jesus said, “Whoever is dear to me I reprove and chastise. Be earnest about it. Repent! Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him

and he with me. This assumes of course that we all have room for improvement. God asks that of us and also gives us the help we need to be better.

That is his kindness to us. He would not be kind to us if he did not stimulate us to keep improving ourselves. The fact that he challenges us to change comes from his love as a caring parent. The parable of the fig tree is a call to live a positive life according to the gospel: doing good by loving God and others. He pushes us to not be complacent about our lives. We all need to repent and work to be better than we are. The season of Lent is a time that reminds us of our need to grow in holiness and goodness. Certainly many people feel that they do not have to do anything special in these forty days. They are good enough. Others start with the ashes on their foreheads and a lot of enthusiasm /praying more, making sacrifices, and doing good work. But as the weeks go by the ashes disappear and so does their enthusiasm. But remember Lent isn't over yet. With four weeks to go let us be encouraged by these readings to do what we can so we can come to Easter with our minds and our hearts renewed.