

Third Sunday of Lent Weekend of 22–23 March

Sometimes you hear Indigenous people refer to Jesus as a 'person of Country'. What might this mean?

It is hard to imagine the Gospels without the connection of Jesus to the sea, the river, the desert, the fields and the mountain. His teaching often featured seeds and birds and sheep and corn. In today's Gospel, we hear the parable of the fig tree. The impatient person wants to cut it down. A wiser person is prepared to work with nature by putting manure on the tree and looking after it. This is a story of growth. God is creative. God is patient with us. God gives us another chance. He journeys with us on our pilgrimage of hope.

This week, Project Compassion brings us the story of Lam, a young man from rural Vietnam. Lam's disability made his upbringing difficult. Sometimes people look at those with disability a little like the fig tree. They judge them and dismiss them.

Through the I-SHINE program, supported by Caritas Australia's partner in Vietnam, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Lam was able to pursue his dreams and become more independent. He enrolled in a six-month IT Technician training course in Da Nang that not only equipped him with professional skills but also rekindled his social connections

and confidence. Lam's dedication during the training paid off as he launched a freelance graphic design business from his home. Today, he is a successful graphic designer, serving clients locally and internationally and earning a stable income every month. He has a creative life.

In today's reading, Moses is in the wilderness, a place of surprising possibilities. Like the Australian landscape, the wilderness in Scripture is subtle; it is a place of encounter with God. Moses thinks he is having a regular day in the family business, looking after his father-in-law's sheep. But a voice comes from a bush that is blazing without being burnt up. The voice tells Moses to take off his shoes because 'the place on which you stand is holy ground.' This is the beginning of the freedom story of his people, the start of their journey out of captivity. May we *Unite Against Poverty* as we create a better world for all God's people.



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all those who live with disability, especially those who are stigmatised in any way. May we do all we can to support their flourishing as truly equal participants in the human family.



Lam is working as a freelance Graphic Designer from his home in Quang Nam, Vietnam.

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