THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Law of Love

Holy God,
you established a covenant with your
people Israel
and gave them the law to direct
their hearts.
Keep us ever mindful of the law of love
revealed in your Son, Jesus,
who liberates us from sin and directs
our hearts.
Give us strength to follow Christ
and wisdom to discern his presence.
Have mercy on us, O Lord,
and banish from us all that keeps us
from you.
Grant us ears to hear your
life-giving words,
which are like honey from the comb,
so that, as temples of their Holy Spirit,
we may proclaim your majesty
to all nations.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 4, 2018

Temples

Today's Readings: Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; 1 Corinthians 1:22–25; John 2:13–25. Today's Gospel is filled with much emotion and action. Imagine yourself either as a merchant or one of the bystanders who observe these events unfold. Jesus, using a whip, drives the merchants from his Father's house. After sitting with this experience, what insight do you gain? Who is Jesus?

The temple is a main theme this week. Jesus makes a bold claim that he will destroy the temple and raise it in three days. Of course, we know the ending of the story, but those in the moment must have been confused. Jesus' actions and words invite us to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation. To encounter Jesus is an encounter with the living God. Jesus' radical proclamation in this passage was likely missed by those present. Through Jesus' death and Resurrection, a new covenant is created. No longer, as in the passage from Exodus, will our relationship to God be measured only by how the Commandments are kept. In Christ, the new temple, the sacrament of God's presence, our relationship is measured by how well our lives are patterned after Jesus.

In Baptism, we died with Christ and we rose to new life. In Baptism, we became temples of the Holy Spirit, which means our bodies are to be honored and others are to be respected as sacred vessels who announce God's love. What must you die to in your life in order to be raised up? As a prayer mantra this week, use today's Psalm refrain "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 5

The Need for Healing

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that a prophet is not accepted in his native place. As he tells of the healing of Naaman, by Elisha, Jesus shows the power of God's Word. Like the prophets of old, Jesus announces and shares the Good News. Jesus was driven out of town because of what he said. When have you heard Jesus but were unwilling to heed his instructions? Naaman eventually listened to Elisha and was healed. Spend fifteen minutes in silent prayer, listening to God. *Today's Readings: 2 Kings 5:1–5ab; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Luke 4:24–30.*

Tuesday, March 6

Boundless Mercy

We hear Peter again ask about forgiveness. Jesus reminds Peter that since God's mercy has no limits, we cannot put a number on the amount of times we should forgive another. Consider the Lord's Prayer. It reminds us, as does the parable, that we are to forgive as God forgives. At dinner, using the crosses you made that first week, discuss the importance of forgiveness. *Today's Readings: Daniel 3:25, 34–43; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 18:21–35.*

Wednesday, March 7

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity

The two saints we remember today were beheaded at public games in Carthage because they refused to deny their Christian faith. The First Reading reminds us to keep the commandments. Look carefully at verse nine, which warns us to not forget the things we have seen. Like Perpetua and Felicity, we have seen the living God and we must not forget his love and mercy. We are called to give witness to the Paschal Mystery in all we do. Pray today for widows and all those unjustly imprisoned. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Psalm 147:12–13, 15–16, 19–20; Matthew 5:17–19.*

Thursday, March 8

God's People

Jeremiah has a tough audience before him. The Lord has said that those who listen and follow him will be his people and prosper, but the Lord reveals to Jeremiah that the people have not listened. This refusal of the people to listen is heard many times during Lent. Time and time again, the Lord sent prophets to his people to call them back, and yet, they remained in the darkness of their hearts. Do the People of God listen today? To open your heart to God's voice, pray the refrain to the Psalm: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 7:23–28; Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9; Luke 11:14–23.*

Friday, March 9

St. Frances of Rome

The reading from Hosea paints a picture of God's profound love for his people. God yearns for us to turn back to him and share in his life and love our neighbor as ourselves. This is exactly what Frances of Rome did. She longed for the Lord, which led her to serve Rome's poor. We are also called to witness God's love. This caring for neighbor is a prophetic voice, like Hosea's, that calls all people to share in the life God offers. Today consider how you can help the poor in your community during the next week. Perhaps you could make a dessert for the homeless shelter. *Today's Readings: Hosea 14:2–10; Psalm 81:6c–8a, 8bc–9, 10–11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28–34.*

Saturday, March 10

Return to the Lord

Hosea's words are clear that God will heal all that is weak and dead within us. When we turn to God in love, we grow in faith and holiness and God showers us with love so that we might live. What does it look like to love God? Let the coming spring be a reminder of God's unfading love for us. Take time to pray with the images of the First Reading today. *Today's Readings: Hosea 6:1–6, Psalm 51:3–4, 18–19, 20–21ab; Luke 18:9–14.*

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