

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



The Gift of the Law

Loving God,
you gave the gift of the law to Moses
that the people might walk in the light
of your love.

In every age you call us back—
heart, mind, soul, and strength
turned to you,

our neighbor loved as ourselves.
Though we fall time and again,
give us the strength to do your will,
to act justly, be merciful, and walk humbly
with you.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 7, 2021 Keep My Commandments



Today's readings: Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; 1 Corinthians 1:22–25; John 2:13–25. The Ten Commandments are often considered to be a list of rules. Even when followed with great care, a person may miss out on the broader vision they embody. What if every person chose to live in accord with God's law? What if each person strove toward this ideal?

The Ten Commandments set out the framework for a just and peaceful society. If the Commandments are approached as a vision, we can see how they help us live in right relationship with those around us. In the reading from Exodus, God proclaims a blessing that proceeds to “the thousandth generation . . . of those who love me and keep

my commandments.” How many receive blessing from the righteousness of the just one!

The ripple effect of sin is evident. Family patterns that are damaging are hard to break, and the actions of those around us affect the way we live in the world.

Jesus often came into conflict with the religious leaders of his day because they differed in their interpretation of what it meant to keep God's law. There was not anything wrong with their desire to obey God's Commandments. Perhaps, though, the intensity of their focus caused them to lose a sense that the law was a vision for a just and peaceful society. Pray with the Commandments. How can they help you work toward a just world?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 8

St. John of God

St. John of God turned away from God in his youth, but returned with his whole heart and lived his life in gratitude for the great mercy he had received. He spent his life in extraordinary works of charity and love on behalf of those who were in greatest need, always with tremendous respect for those he served. God's mercy and forgiveness is always waiting for us. When have you felt God's forgiveness most fully? How can you respond with a grateful heart? *Today's readings: 2 Kings 5:1–15b; Psalm 42:2–3, 43:3–4; Luke 4:24–30.*

Tuesday, March 9

Not Seven but Seventy-Seven Times

Why is it so difficult to forgive? Even though we know that holding onto our anger hurts, we brood over every small wrong. In today's parable of the unforgiving servant, the difference between the value of the two debts is enormous. This contrast shows us the tremendousness of God's love and forgiveness and startles us with our own stinginess. What would it mean for you to forgive seventy-seven times? To forgive as you have been forgiven? *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 3:25, 34–43; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6, 7bc, 8, 9; Matthew 18:21–35.*

Wednesday, March 10

Whoever Obeys and Teaches

Some people focus on following their own way, no matter the cost. We know, though, that our will often leads us astray, seeking after things that are not good for us, and that we engage in self-deception about what we really need. The Ten Commandments provide objective standards for behavior, even as complete freedom is within them. *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Psalm 147:12–13, 15–16, 19–20; Matthew 5:17–19.*

Thursday, March 11

Miraculous Growth

Today we hear that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Jesus casts out a demon, revealing a glimpse of the coming kingdom and making space for its miraculous growth. By giving up our sins and selfishness, we too make space for miraculous growth of God's love within us. Pray the Rosary today in the hope that the spirit it cultivates will cast out all that is not of God and help bring about this miraculous growth. *Today's readings: Jeremiah 7:23–28; Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9; Luke 11:14–23.*

Friday, March 12

The Summary of the Law

Today the Gospel tells us that love of God and love of neighbor are the primary principles that ought to govern our lives. What would it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? How would our lives be different if we loved our neighbor as ourselves? Does this necessarily mean putting ourselves last? It says love your neighbor as yourself. How can we respect our needs so that we are able to love others more fully? *Today's readings: Hosea 14:2–10; Psalm 81:6c–8a, 8bc–9, 10–11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28–34.*

Saturday, March 13

O God, Be Merciful

When we look at our lives, we see how much we are in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. It is always there for us, requiring only that we seek it. People have used the words of the tax collector in today's reading from Luke, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," in their prayers expressing contrition. Try incorporating this prayer into your daily prayer as a means of letting God's mercy act on you. *Today's readings: Hosea 6:1–6; Psalm 51:3–4, 18–19, 20–21ab; Luke 18:9–14.*

