

# **THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT**

**3-9 March 2024**

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- Sun.      **The Third Sunday of Lent**  
March 3   **ZEAL FOR THE FATHER AND FOR HIS HOUSE**  
            From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis, 3rd Sunday of Lent, 4 March 2018
- Mon.      **Monday of the Third Week of Lent**  
4          **TO WHOM DO YOU LOOK?**  
            A Reflection developed from a text by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller
- Tues.     **Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent**  
5          **ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS IMPLIES FORGIVING**  
            From the Homily of Pope Francis, Tuesday, 17 March 2020
- Wed.      **Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent**  
6          **THE “FULLNESS” OF CHRIST’S LAW**  
            From the Angelus Message of Pope BENEDICT XVI, 3 February 2011
- Thurs.    **Thursday of the Third Week of Lent**  
7          **ALL THAT IS RIGHT AND GOOD**  
            From The Great Church Year by Fr Karl Rahner, SJ
- Fri.        **Friday of the Third Week of Lent**  
8          **RETURN TO GOD AND RETURN TO THE EMBRACE OF THE FATHER**  
            From the Homily of Pope Francis, Friday, 20 March 2020
- Sat.       **Saturday of the Third Week of Lent**  
9          **REPENT**  
            From The Letter of Pope St Clement I to the Corinthians (Chs 7, 4-8, 3; 8, 5-9, 1; 13, 1-4; 19, 2)

Sunday

## **ZEAL FOR THE FATHER AND FOR HIS HOUSE**

**From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis, 3rd Sunday of Lent, 4 March 2018**

Today's Gospel presents, in John's version, the episode in which Jesus drives the merchants out of the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. 2:13-25). He performs this act with the help of a whip of small cords, overturns the tables and says: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (v. 16). This decisive action, undertaken in proximity to Passover, makes a great impression on the crowd and sparks the hostility of the religious authorities and of those who feel their economic interests threatened. But how should we interpret it? It certainly was not a violent action, insomuch as it did not provoke the intervention of the defenders of public order: the police. No! But it was interpreted as *an action typical of prophets*, who often denounced, in the name of God, abuses and excesses. The issue raised was that of authority. In fact, the Jews asked Jesus: "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" (v. 18), that is, what authority do you have to do these things? As if to demand that he show he was truly acting in the name of God.

To interpret Jesus' act of purifying the house of God, his disciples made use of a biblical text taken from Psalm 69[68]: "For zeal for thy house has consumed me" (v. 17); the Psalm says this: "For zeal for thy house has consumed be". This Psalm is a call for help in a situation of extreme peril due to the hatred of enemies: the situation that Jesus will experience in his Passion.

Zeal for the Father and for his house will lead him all the way to the Cross: his is the zeal of love that leads to self-sacrifice, not that false zeal that presumes to serve God through violence. Indeed the "sign" that Jesus will give as proof of his authority will be precisely his death and Resurrection: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). The Evangelist notes: "But he spoke of the temple of his body". With Jesus' Paschal Mystery begins the *new worship*, in the new temple, the worship of love, and the *new temple* is He himself.

Jesus' behavior recounted in today's Gospel passage exhorts us to live our life not in search of our own advantage and interests, but *for the glory of God who is love*. We are called to always bear in mind those powerful words of Jesus: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (v. 16). It is very harmful when the Church goes astray with this manner of making the house of God a house of trade. These words help us to reject the danger of also making our soul, which is God's dwelling place, a house of trade, by living in constant search of our personal interests instead of generous and supportive love. This teaching of Jesus is always timely, not only for Church communities, but also for individuals, for civil communities and for society as a whole. Indeed, it is a common temptation to exploit good, sometimes dutiful deeds in order to cultivate private, if not entirely illicit interests. It is a grave danger, especially when one exploits God himself and the worship owed to him, or service to mankind, His image. This is why Jesus used "a harsh approach" that time, in order to shake us from this mortal danger.

May the Virgin Mary support us in the effort to make Lent a good occasion to recognize God as the One Lord of our life, removing all forms of idolatry from our hearts and from our deeds.

*Monday*

## **TO WHOM DO YOU LOOK?**

**A Reflection developed from a text by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller**

Anciently, any sort of incurable skin disease symbolized that death was triumphing in the person affected, and thus made that person unfit to come close to the God of Life, the One Lord of Israel. Such a one was cut off from the community with those who belong to the One Living God. Standing at a significant distance, then ten such people called out to Jesus. One of them was a Samaritan—probably despised even by the others, who were Jews. The Samaritan was pushed away from God in two ways, and yet he hoped in God and recognized God's presence in Jesus as much as any of his fellow lepers.

To whom do you turn when you feel or really are isolated, even rejected? We all felt that sometime during our growing up years. Did it occur to us to turn to God? Did it occur to us that God might not have rejected us or pushed us away just because our peers had? Hope and acceptance are ordinarily inseparable, at least in a young person's mind. Now put that together with the fact that Jesus accepted these ten and healed them of the physical side of their isolation. But nine didn't even think of thanking him—only the one who knew rejection from almost every side saw the real need to draw near to the one who had reached out with love and healing. That's what gratitude is about.

The very successful General Naaman, head of the Syrian army, had no one to whom he could turn to heal his leprosy. A little girl, enslaved by Naaman, told him to turn to Elisha, the prophet of a God he had never worshipped or acknowledged. When he asked for healing the One God healed him, even in his unbelief. To have God's help you just have to turn from human resources and ask. God gives freely, as Elisha showed by refusing all payment. Secretly Elisha's servant went and asked for payment; he got money but also Naaman's leprosy.

What does God ask? Only that our gratitude cause us to point to the Lord as everyone's hope for healing and life. To whom does God send us, to those who are outcast and marginalized and have no one to turn to. How does one recognize such people? By their being shut in upon themselves, not knowing how to reach out for help or to whom they should turn. What God wants now is to give us a reason to be grateful so we can show others where healing and new life are found. So we begin by turning to God, once we realize that the life we seek isn't to be found anywhere else. Then we need only share the story of how God healed us and gave us new hope and joy. That is our vocation and there are millions of ways to live it out. Grateful love is the beginning of all vocations and their heart.

Tuesday

## **ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS IMPLIES FORGIVING**

**From the Homily of Pope Francis, Tuesday, 17 March 2020**

Unity, friendship, peace between brothers and sisters attract God's benevolence. And Peter asks the question: "Yes, but what are we to do to the people who offend us?" "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (v. 21). And Jesus answered with that word which means, in their language, "always": "Seventy times seven" (v. 22). One must always forgive.

It is not easy to forgive because our self-centered hearts are always attached to hatred, to revenge, to resentment.

We have all seen families destroyed by family hatred that is passed down from one generation to the next. It seems that attachment to hatred is stronger than that of love- This precisely - let's say - is the devil's "treasure". He always lurks among our grudges, among our hatreds, and makes them grow. He keeps them like that to destroy, to destroy everything. He often destroys over small things.

It is what destroyed this God who came not to condemn but to forgive. This God who is able to throw a feast for a sinner who draws near to Him and forgets everything. When God forgives us, He forgets all the evil we've done. Someone has said "it's God's sickness". He doesn't have a memory. He can lose His memory in these cases. He forgives us and goes on. He only asks us to do the same: to learn to forgive, not to continue to bear this fruitless cross of hatred, of resentment.

This teaching is neither Christian nor human. Jesus' generosity teaches us that to enter into heaven, we must forgive. Do not come to me with love for me in one hand and hatred for your brother or sister in the other". Consistency in love. Forgiving. Forgiving from the heart.

There are people who live by condemning people, speaking ill of people, continually harming their co-workers' reputations, and that of their neighbors, their relatives... Because they do not pardon something that was done to them, or they do not forgive something that they did not like. It seems that the wealth of the devil is this: sowing the love of non-forgiveness, living attached to non-forgiveness. Indeed, forgiveness is a condition for going to heaven.

The parable that Jesus tells us (cf. *Mt* 18:23-25) is very clear: forgive. May the Lord teach us this wisdom of forgiving, which is not easy. And let us do something: when we go to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let us first ask ourselves: "Do I forgive?" If I feel that I do not forgive, I cannot make believe that I am asking for forgiveness because I will not be forgiven. Asking forgiveness means forgiving. Both go together. They cannot be separated. Moreover, those who ask for forgiveness for themselves, like that man whose master forgives everything, but does not forgive others, end up like that man (cf. vv. 32-34). "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart" (v. 35).

May the Lord help us understand this, to lower our heads so as not to be proud but magnanimous in forgiving. At least to forgive "out of interest". Why? Yes, to forgive, because if I do not forgive, I will not be forgiven. At least this. But always forgiveness.

Wednesday

## THE “FULLNESS” OF CHRIST’S LAW

From the Angelus Message of Pope BENEDICT XVI, 13 February 2011

Jesus proclaims the new Law, his *Torah*, as our Jewish brothers and sisters call it. In fact, on his coming, the Messiah was also to bring the definitive revelation of the Law and this is precisely what Jesus declares: “Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them”.

And addressing his disciples, he adds: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 5:17,20). But what does this “fullness” of Christ’s Law and this “superior” justice that he demands consist in?

Jesus explains it with a series of antitheses between the old commandments and his new way of propounding them. He begins each time: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old...”, and then he asserts: “but I say to you”.... For example, “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘*you shall not kill*; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement’. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement” (Mt 5:21-22).

And he does this six times. This manner of speaking made a great impression on the people, who were shocked, because those words: “I say to you” were equivalent to claiming the actual authority of God, the source of the Law. The newness of Jesus consists essentially in the fact that he himself “fulfills” the commandments with the love of God, with the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within him. And we, through faith in Christ, can open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit who makes us capable of living divine love.

So it is that every precept becomes true as a requirement of love, and all join in a single commandment: love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. “Love is the fulfilling of the Law”, St Paul writes (Rom 13:10).

With regard to this requirement, for example, the pitiful case of the four Rom children, who died last week when their shack caught fire on the outskirts of this city, forces us to ask ourselves whether a more supportive and fraternal society, more consistent in love, in other words, more Christian, might not have been able to prevent this tragic event. And this question applies in the case of so many other grievous events, more or less known, which occur daily in our cities and our towns.

Dear friends, perhaps it is not by chance that Jesus’ first great preaching is called the “Sermon on the Mount”! Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Law of God and bring it to the Chosen People. Jesus is the Son of God himself who came down from Heaven to lead us to Heaven, to God’s height, on the way of love. Indeed, he himself is this way; all we have to do in order to put into practice God’s will and to enter his Kingdom, eternal life, is to follow him.

Only one creature has already scaled the mountain peak: the Virgin Mary. Through her union with Jesus, her righteousness was perfect: for this reason, we invoke her as *Speculum iustitiae*. Let us entrust ourselves to her so that she may guide our steps in fidelity to Christ’s Law.

*Thursday*

## **ALL THAT IS RIGHT AND GOOD**

### **From The Great Church Year by Fr Karl Rahner, SJ**

On the one hand, Jesus regards things which are of purely earthly significance, things like bodily health which concerns purely earthly welfare, as subject to diabolical influence; on the other, he regards what is right and good in this earthly dimension as a sign that the kingdom of God, the kingdom of eternity, has come. All this is clearly relevant to our theme.

We can state it quite simply. Even in this Gospel, which has no intention of expounding cultural-political principles, it clearly emerges that every human being and every Christian has a cultural mission. Culture is taken here in the widest sense: everything in this earthly life is worthy of human dignity...

The Christian is the person of eternity, the man or woman of God-given truth, the one who hears the word of the living God from beyond this world; the Christian is not just someone who prays: "Thy kingdom come" or "Let this world pass." The Christian is not just an individual who is waiting for eternity and looks on all earthly things as temporary; as a Christian, she or he is a person sent into the world to carry out the earthly mission of her or his creator and Lord, the creator of heaven and earth.

And why? So that everything that is good and wholesome, meaningful and upright, luminous and beautiful, and complete and splendid on this earth is given to know through this healing which routs the powers of darkness, that the kingdom of God has come.

Friday

## RETURN TO GOD AND RETURN TO THE EMBRACE OF THE FATHER

From the Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis, Friday, 20 March 2020

When I read or listen to this passage from the prophet Hosea, which we heard in the First Reading (cf. 14:2-10), which says “Return Israel, to the Lord, your God” (v. 2), “return”... When I hear it, I remember a song that *Carlo Buti* sang 75 years ago. The Italian families in Buenos Aires used to listen to it. They liked it a lot. “Return to your daddy. He will still sing you a lullaby. Return.” It is your daddy who tells you to return. “Come home, listen, come”. And that memory - I was still just a boy - leads me straight away to the father in Chapter 15 of Luke, that father who, it says, “while he was still a long way off, ... saw him” (cf v. 20), that son who had gone away with all his money and squandered it (vv. 13-14). If he sees him from a distance, it’s because He was waiting for him. Return to your Daddy, return to your Father. He is waiting for you. It is God’s tenderness that speaks to us, especially during Lent. It is the time to enter into ourselves and to remember the Father, to return to our Daddy.

“No, father, I am ashamed to return because... I have done so many things wrong...”. What does the Lord say? “Return, I heal their disloyalty, I will love them with all my heart, for my anger has turned from them. I will fall like dew on Israel. He shall bloom like the lily, and thrust out roots like the poplar” (cf. *Hos* 14:5-6). Return to your father who awaits you. The God of tenderness will heal us. He will heal us from so many of life’s wounds, of the many bad things we have done. Everyone has their own!

Let us think of this: Going back to God is going back to an embrace, the Father’s embrace. And let us think of that other promise that Isaiah makes: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (cf. 1:18). He is capable of transforming us, He is capable of changing our hearts, but we must make the first step: to return. It is not going to God, no. It is going back home.

And Lent always focuses on this conversion of the heart that, in the Christian way of life, takes form in the sacrament of Confession. It is the moment to... let God “purify” us, to let God embrace us.

I know that many of you go to confession before Easter so you can be right with God again. But many will say to me today: “But, Father, where can I find a priest, a confessor, when I can’t leave the house? And I want to make peace with the Lord. I want Him to embrace me. I want my Daddy to embrace me... How can I do it if I can’t find a priest?” Do what the Catechism says.

It is very clear. Speak to God. He is your Father. Tell Him the truth: ‘Lord. I did this and this and this. Pardon me.’ Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an Act of Contrition, and promise Him, ‘Afterward I will go to confession, but forgive me now.’ You will return to God’s grace immediately. You yourself can draw near to God’s forgiveness, as the Catechism teaches us, without having a priest at hand. Think about it: this is the moment! This is the right moment, the appropriate moment. An Act of Contrition made well. In this way, our souls will become as white as snow.

*Saturday*

## **REPENT**

**From The Letter of Pope St Clement I to the Corinthians (Chs 7, 4-8, 3; 8, 5-9, 1; 13, 1-4; 19, 2)**

"Let us fix our thoughts on the blood of Christ; and reflect how precious that blood is in God's eyes, since its outpouring for our salvation has opened the grace of repentance to all mankind. For we have only to survey the generations of the past to see that in every one of them, the Lord has offered the chance of repentance to any who were willing to turn to him. When Noah preached repentance, those who gave heed to him were saved. When, after Jonah had proclaimed destruction to the people of Nineveh, they repented of their sins and made atonement to God with prayers and supplications, they obtained their salvation, notwithstanding that, they were strangers and aliens to him.

All those who were ministers of the grace of God have spoken, through the Holy Spirit, of repentance. The very Lord of all himself has spoken of it, and even with an oath: By my life, the Lord declares, it is not the sinner's death that I desire, so much as his repentance; and he adds this gracious pronouncement, Repent, O house of Israel, and turn from your wickedness. Say to the children of my people, Though your sins may stretch from earth to heaven, and though they may be redder than scarlet and blacker than sackcloth, yet if you turn wholeheartedly to me and say 'Father', I will listen to you as I would to a people that was holy.

Thus, by his own almighty will, he has confirmed his desire that repentance should be open to every one of his beloved.

Let us bow, then, to that sovereign and glorious will. Let us entreat his mercy and goodness, casting ourselves upon his compassion and wasting no more energy in quarrels and rivalry which only ends in death.

My brothers, do let us have a little humility; let us forget our self-assertion and braggadocio and stupid quarreling, and do what the Bible tells us instead. The Holy Spirit says, The wise man is not to brag of his wisdom, nor the strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his wealth; if a man must boast, he should boast of the Lord, seeking him out and acting with justice and uprightness. More particularly, let us remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said in one of his lessons on mildness and forbearance. Be merciful, he told us, that you may obtain mercy; forgive; that you may be forgiven. What you do yourself, will be done to you; what you give, will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness; so it will be shown to you. Your portion will be weighed out for you on your own scales. May this precept, and these commands, strengthen our resolve to live in obedience to his sacred words, and in humility of mind; for the holy word says, Whom shall I look upon, but him that is gentle and peaceable, and trembles at my sayings?

Thus there exists a vast heritage of glorious achievements for us to share in. Let us then make haste and get back to the state of tranquillity which was set before us in the beginning as the mark for us to aim at. Let us turn our eyes to the Father and Creator of the universe, and when we consider how precious and peerless are his gifts of peace, let us embrace them eagerly for ourselves."