

Homily: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent Cycle B: 2015: Ex 20: 1-17; Ps. 19; 1 Corth 1: 22-25; Jn. 2: 13-25

**“When we are discouraged by our weaknesses, give us confidence in Your Love!”**

Now is a very good time - since we are now almost at the halfway point of Lent - to take some time to reflect on our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving: *to see how we are doing, whether they are being a remedy for our sins, as the opening prayer stated, and how during this second half of Lent we can even do better, if we are generous with the Lord and trust in His Mercy and grace.*

1. **The Lord knows us better than we know ourselves.** Do we realize this and what that means on a practical level? Jesus, as God, by taking on our human nature understands first-hand what we go through in our daily lives here on earth and He wants to help us. **Do we trust Him?** As it says today in the Gospel, after Jesus drives the money changers out of the Temple, *“He did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.”* This sentence ties together the Gospel and the 1<sup>st</sup> reading from Exodus today on the 10 Commandments. **God knows human nature since He made it, and so He gives us the Commandments to teach us the way to happiness and salvation as individuals and as a people.** What a beautiful place this world would be if everyone simply kept the 10 Commandments! The 10 Commandments, of which the whole Catholic moral life is built upon as a rock foundation, is the path that leads to true life. *To love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength (the first 3 Commandments), and to love our neighbor as ourselves (the last 7 Commandments), is how Jesus sums up the Law and the Prophets.* This is why He is so upset today in the Temple, the one time in the Gospel where Jesus actually loses His temper in righteous anger. The people are turning *“His Father’s house into a marketplace”*: a serious violation of both the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandments. And by the way, as an important aside, if we think this justifies our own fits of anger, remember probably 9 times out of 10 our anger is not righteous, but disordered (*usually the bitter fruit of wounded pride and/or impatience*), since people often falsely use this incident of Jesus to justify their own anger. The **spiritual lesson** this cleaning out of the Temple by Jesus should be for us is an

incentive for you and me to keep Sunday holy (3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment) and not to set up other things in our lives as gods (1<sup>st</sup> Commandment). *I'm sure the Lord is not pleased today with all the buying and selling that takes place on Sunday in our country which is the holy day each week for us Christians: a day to pray and worship God, a day to spend with our family and friends in relaxation, to reach out to others in acts of charity, and a day simply to rest from the stresses of the world and our work. Not a day to shop and buy stuff, or to catch up on all the work we didn't get finished during the week.* How are we doing in this regard? Lent is a good time to re-prioritize, to re-focus our lives on the Lord, and to repent and confess if we have not been keeping Sunday as holy as we should.

- 2. In a broader sense remember our entire moral life as Catholic Christians is a call to invite Jesus into our hearts, souls and daily existence:** *to live in a relationship of self-giving love with the Lord. We need His grace (life) to do this.* On our own we are too weak and will often choose selfishness. In the Catholic moral life at the foundational level there is no self-help dynamic - picking ourselves up by our own bootstraps, but rather a humble beseeching of the Lord on a daily basis for His strength and grace. But there is an important part for us to play: *in our human freedom God's grace builds on our human nature, and so our acts of penance and self-denial, our prayer, fasting and almsgiving prepare the spiritual ground of our lives so God can enter in more fully.* **Lent is a time to train our mind, imagination, memory, heart, and most of all our wills to choose the good** as revealed by God in the **10 Commandments rooted not in our own "strength"**, but in the divinely infused **theological virtues** of *Faith, Hope and Charity*; the **cardinal virtues**: of *prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude*, and in the **gifts of the Holy Spirit received** in Baptism and Confirmation: *wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, fear of the Lord, and piety.* The Catholic moral life is never simply a matter of outwardly following the "rules" of God and the Catholic Church that speaks authoritatively in His Name, but of living interiorly the new life of Christ, received in our Baptism, empowered by the Holy Spirit. **God never settles for externals; He**

wants our entire person to be transformed by grace from within by the Holy Spirit: *in our mind, heart, will and imagination and memory*. This does involve the Cross, the dying to selfishness in all its varied and clever forms. But if we are willing to allow the Lord to work in our lives, it is **the only** moral and spiritual way which leads to **inner freedom and joy**, to rejoicing in the Truth, in Love, and Goodness - in carrying out God's holy will rather than our own!

3. **Finally if we truly see the 10 Commandments and moral teachings of the Catholic Church as God's expression of love for the human race, as His blueprint for sanctity and to lead us on the narrow path to Heaven, it puts sin in a whole new light.** *When we sin we fail to Love the one who loved us so much that He died for us. We fail to see our neighbor as created for the same eternal glory as us.* May we all make an honest and holy **Confession** of our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lenten season, if we haven't already done so, and ask God for the grace to be healed more deeply and transformed more fully by His Love in our daily life, so as to always walk on the narrow path that leads to His Heavenly Kingdom. God bless you.

**Recommended Reading:**

**Deep Conversion/Deep Prayer.** Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M. Ignatius Press. 2006. (This is one of the best little books on growing in holiness, in deeper prayer, and in conversion of daily life to the Lord – please check it out- if you don't already have it in your library; and if you do, read it again😊).