

# THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

## LECTIOINARY #29

READING I Exodus 20:1-17

A reading from the Book of Exodus

[In those days, God delivered all these commandments:

"I, the LORD, am your God,

who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.

You shall not have other gods besides me.]

You shall not carve idols for yourselves

in the shape of anything in the sky above

or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;

you shall not bow down before them or worship them.

For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God,

inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness

on the children of those who hate me,

down to the third and fourth generation;

but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation

on the children of those who love me and keep

my commandments.

["You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.

For the LORD will not leave unpunished

the one who takes his name in vain.

"Remember to keep holy the sabbath day;

Six days you may labor and do all your work,

but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God.

Exodus = Ek-suh-duns

The even tone of a narrator turns to the voice of one giving a command: firm yet kind. The familiarity with the commands might encourage rushing. Resist. Let each command settle on the assembly so they can appropriate it into their behavior.

The consequences of sin have a ripple effect on families.

There are options for today's readings. Contact your parish staff to learn which readings will be used.

### READING I

The law, the temple, and God's oneness constitute the fundamental institutions for God's chosen people. These three are the bedrock of their religious beliefs and traditions. The meaning of each is on full display in today's Liturgy of the Word. The Exodus reading consists of the ten commandments and treats the law and God's oneness. As the

fundamental laws given by God to the chosen people, the ten commandments organize and summarize Torah's many laws, making them tantamount to an abridged version of the whole Torah. They are so important that Moses reiterates them (slightly differently) in Deuteronomy 5, prior to the people's entry into the promised land. For the sake of focus, we will attend to the first commandment: "I, the LORD, am your God. . . . You shall not have other gods besides me." This commandment, along with the next two, treats God's nature and protects the chosen people as a rightful

what it means to be in right relationship with God. The chosen people are not to have any image or anything that takes the place of idolatrous practices of the chosen people that follow the giving of the commandments indicate that the meaning of this commandment would take time to grasp. As the reading continues, we learn that the one true God rightly manifests jealousy toward the chosen people. Often mistaken as envy (a vice), jealousy means God protects the chosen people as a rightful

**No work** may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

["Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you. **You shall not kill.** You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."]

[Shorter: Exodus 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17 (see brackets)]

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11 (John 6:68c)

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just. They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold; sweeter also than syrup, or honey from the comb.

For meditation and context:

Emphasize the new information and subdue the words when repeated. For further explanation on emphasizing and subduing, see the introduction to the *Workbook*.

possession. Envy, by contrast, would amount to God desiring someone or something that rightfully belongs to another—this is impossible since the whole earth belongs to God (see Exodus 9:29). Understood in this way, God's jealous protection of the chosen people is on display even when God promises intergenerational punishment of the wicked. After all, rather than hatred to the thousandth generation, which would match the scope of mercy extended to obedient families, God promises to protect those who are unborn (the fifth gener-

READING II

Continuing the first reading's focus on God's one-ness, the passage from 1 Corinthians highlights how God confounds expectations of divine behavior. To make his point, Paul contrasts how Jews and Greek Gentiles expected God to act. According to Paul, Jews of his day expected God to manifest power in signs. Evidently, such signs were deeds thought to be something only God could perform. Thus, when signs were perceived, Jews considered God to be nearby and active. Alternatively, Greeks, according to Paul, expected God to act in accord with wisdom. That is, God should behave in a way that conforms to reason and in accord with predictable, discernible rules governing the universe.

READING II 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Corinthians = kohr-in-thee-uhnz

Paul is trying to bring this insight to a world that is not looking for a crucified savior.

Practice to keep the integrity of the parallel structures intact.

GOSPEL John 2:13-25

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, *Zeal for your house will consume me.* At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

yet, as Paul notes, God sends Christ to die on a cross. By both Jewish and Greek standards of Paul's time, God's definitive action in Christ baffles. By sending Christ to die on the cross, God's action simultaneously manifests total weakness and absurdity. In Jesus' crucifixion, God does not subdue powerful oppressors as had been the case with Pharaoh in Egypt. Nor does God overcome human sin by ushering in universal training in and practice of virtue, as a good Greek might propose. Instead, by manifesting the fullness of grace in Jesus' violent death on the cross, God reveals

GOSPEL

sovereignty.

how God alone can manifest power and act wisely in apparent displays of abject weakness and insanity. Ultimately, Paul sees God's sovereign plan that is worked out in Christ's death quite apart from any concern about weakness or power, wisdom or folly. Only the one true God could act with such fundamental institutions of the Jewish faith—the temple, the law, and God's oneness—comes into view as he cleanses this area of the temple would have been during a pilgrimage festival like Passover, bustling with more devout Jews who had made their way to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice for such occasions. The commerce unfolding in this area was normative activity that helped pilgrims fulfill their obliga-

Jesus answered and said to them,  
 "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."  
 The Jews said,  
 "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years,  
 and you will raise it up in three days?"  
 But he was speaking about the temple of his body.  
 Therefore, when he was raised from the dead,  
 his disciples remembered that he had said this,  
 and they came to believe the Scripture  
 and the word Jesus had spoken.  
 While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,  
 many began to believe in his name  
 when they saw the signs he was doing.  
 But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew  
 them all,  
 and did not need anyone to testify about human nature.  
 He himself understood it well.

a den of thieves?" In John's Gospel, the dis-  
 toward the temple, the law, and the one  
 true God. After all, God had not yet facili-  
 tated the temple's completion after more  
 than forty years. Jesus, however, makes a  
 more audacious and obscure claim: as the  
 one true God and incarnate word, Jesus will  
 fulfill the chosen people's fundamental  
 institutions when the temple of his body  
 rises from the dead on the third day. Jesus'  
 resurrection makes his claim intelligible  
 and leads the disciples to a more deeply  
 held belief of Scripture and Jesus' word.  
 E.W.

Jesus is speaking metaphorically, and the  
 Jews, listening literally, misunderstand him.  
 Use a narrator voice as John interprets for  
 his readers what Jesus meant.  
 Pause before the concluding scene. Jesus  
 wants us to be in a relationship with him.  
 He doesn't want to be used just for his power.

tions to the sacrificial laws of Torah,  
 especially those in Leviticus. Having entered  
 this quasi-commercial context, Jesus drives  
 out buyers and sellers and, according to  
 John, overturns tables of the money chang-  
 ers, which certainly caused a stir.  
 Jesus' disruptive behavior is then justi-  
 fied in each Gospel based on biblical tradi-  
 tion. In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew,  
 Mark, and Luke), Jesus justifies his actions  
 by citing Isaiah 56:7—"my house shall be  
 called a house of prayer for all peoples"  
 —and Jeremiah 7:11—"Has this house  
 which bears my name become in your eyes