

# *Gratitude Foundation*

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*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

## **The Third Sunday of Lent—Year B**

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*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Third Sunday of Lent - Year B

## Reading I

### Ex 20:1-17

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.  
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,  
the sea and all that is in them;  
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.”

## Responsorial Psalm

### 19:8, 9, 10, 11

**R. (John 6:68c) Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul;  
The decree of the LORD is trustworthy,  
giving wisdom to the simple.

**R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

The precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the command of the LORD is clear,  
enlightening the eye.

**R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true,  
all of them just.

**R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

They are more precious than gold,  
than a heap of purest gold;  
sweeter also than syrup  
or honey from the comb.

**R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

## Reading II

### 1 Cor 1:22-25

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.

## Verse Before the Gospel

### Jn 3:16

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

## Gospel

### Jn 2:13-25

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?”  
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.

# Exegesis

## Ex 20:1-17

The Decalogue is also found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 with subtle differences. The first 3 commandments address our relationship with God and the following 7 our relationship with each other. In the Middle East at the time the normal worship between humans and their God's included the presence of idols representing the god of the day. God makes it clear to the Israelites, "I, Yahweh, am your God." There is no other. Verses 3-5a forbid images. God is one and He is with us such that there is no need of carved images. We have a God who is passionate about His beloved creation. *Impassioned* is a better translation than *jealous*. Yahweh is passionately committed to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Monotheism is unique to the Jews. The Sabbath day is unique to the Israelite People as well. The custom of sabbath rest of course is based on the story of creation.

The following 7 commandments address how we are to live in relationship with one another. We cannot love God without loving the child of God next to us, or our nearest neighbor in need.

## Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Our Psalm today is sometimes referred to as a wisdom hymn. The song shifts from praising the glory of creation to the gift of the Law. Obviously, the passage was selected to support our first reading today. It is out of love that God gives us His precepts to guide our lives. It is important to point out that the connotation of *fear of the Lord* is much different than our normal English meaning of *fear*. Fear in the original Hebrew had more of a connotation of awe or reverence. In awe and reverence, we are grateful to God for the gift of His laws and decrees.

## 1 Cor 1:22-25

In our pericope St. Paul is addressing the community at Corinth in response to the divisions developing in the infant church. This particular section is sometimes entitled *God has Different Standards*. For centuries the Israelite People were expecting a Messiah but had a much different idea of what the Messiah would be. The Cross of Jesus is still a stumbling block. Paul assures them that it is the way of God, i.e. self-giving love. It is the only sign and the only wisdom that is necessary.

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1. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy, P.H, page 52.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Jn 2:13-25

John places the *Cleansing of the Temple* scene at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus whereas all three Synoptic Gospels place the event near the end of His ministry. (cf. Mark 11:15-17; Matt 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-46). In John's Gospel the incident immediately follows the *First Miracle at Cana* and leads to the story of the encounter with Nicodemus. The occasion for Jesus going up to Jerusalem is the Passover Feast. This is the first of 3 separate Passover Feasts that Jesus attends in the flow of John's Gospel. In His final Passover Jesus becomes the Passover Lamb.

The Law required that the temple tax and all transactions required the use of the Tyrian shekel. The voluntary temple tax was ½ shekel for each male 20 years or older. Roman and all other currency had to be exchanged before the tax and cult transactions occurred. There are suggestions that the money changers were not above cheating people on the exchange rate.

Jesus is overcome with what He experiences in His Father's House. His disciples recall Psalm 69:10, i.e. *Zeal for your house will consume me*. The Ark of the Covenant, the Stone Tablets of the Decalogue were present in the Holy of Holies just a few feet away. The lack of reverence and awareness had to be difficult for Jesus.

The Jews demand a sign. Jesus just performed His first sign at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Now Jesus foreshadows the final sign, His death and resurrection, referring to the temple of His body. The presence of God in the Jerusalem Temple is now being replaced by the presence of God in Jesus.

It is after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the disciples are transformed. They are able to reflect back and come to a deeper understanding and belief. In the Gospel of John this *pistis*, i.e., *faith*, is everything. Faith is necessary for eternal life. John later states: *These things are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name.* (John 21:31)

## Reflection

Our first reading this weekend should be very familiar to all of us. The reading recounts the gift of the Ten Commandments that were given to us through Moses on the Holy Mountain. God is giving us a guidebook for life. Out of love for us God wants us to live in right relationship with Him and with each other. The first three commandments ask us to live in communion with God and the last seven demand that we live in communion with all of humanity. God is inviting us to choose wisely the way that we live in this world so as to share eternal life with Him in the world to come.

The whole of the Old Testament is a story of a people who are always struggling to get it right. They are keenly aware of their failings and the reality of their self-inflicted alienation from God as they continually strayed from God's Covenantal Law. Consequently, it is a story of a people seeking atonement, literally seeking at-one-ment with God. Central to the road to atonement was the ritual of animal sacrifice to God in the temple in Jerusalem. In our Gospel this weekend as Jesus enters the temple He overturns the money changers tables and drives out the animals of sacrifice.

As the true Lamb of God enters the temple, He confronts people who were right there in His Father's House breaking the commandments. The man-made law insisted that the temple tax and the purchase of the animals of sacrifice had to be paid with Jewish money. Because people came to the temple from all over the known world, they had to first exchange their money for Tyrian currency. The money changers had a reputation for cheating and taking advantage of people in the exchange. Jesus is outraged at the injustice that He observes being done to those who are seeking oneness with His Father. He has to be deeply hurt by bold indifference to His Father's House, people making it into a marketplace and a den of thieves.

At an even deeper level, Jesus is the replacement of the Temple. He is the new enfleshment of, the new dwelling place of the Divine Presence. The fullness of God lives in Him. He and the Father are One. As Jesus delivers Himself up as the Lamb of God, He will become the one sacrifice of atonement to end all sacrifices. Jesus becomes the Way to oneness with the Father. The Cross becomes the bridge between Heaven and Earth. There is no longer a need for the animals that have been driven out. There is no longer need for the money changers tables. In Jesus the price is being paid for us.

All of our lives must be a response to the gift of God who so loves the world that He gives us His only son. With St Paul we proclaim Christ crucified; a stumbling block to our wayward drifting world, but a bridge to eternal life for those who believe. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle within us the fire of Your love. Help us to proclaim You with our lives!

In Christ Crucified,



## Personal Witness

Our faith is more than a Creed that we profess, it is more than a system of beliefs that we adhere to, it is more than a lens or prism through which we look a life, it is a way of life. God gives us rules and guidelines for life. The foundation of which are the Ten Commandments.

At an early age, as part of the Baltimore Catechism that I was forced to memorize from cover to cover, I reduced the Ten Commandments to memory. I could recite them on que. As with much of what I memorized I did not understand half of what I could recite. One day as a 13-year-old, the seventh commandment was put to the test. The facts are as clear today as they were nearly 60 years ago. They are clear because the decision that I was forced to make became a foundational moment in my life. As such I was brought back to that moment hundreds of times.

I was on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade basketball team. I attended a public school that was invited to play in the local Catholic league. We were playing in a Saturday tournament at St. Joseph's School in the heart of our local town. After our morning game we had a break of a couple of hours before our next game. Some of my friends and I walked down the local main street that was lined with stores that had lunch bars and soda fountains, I think they were referred to commonly as five-and-dime stores. One of my friends decided that we should steal a couple of water pistols and use them on the girls back at the gym. My job was to keep the clerk busy while they pulled off the heist. I quickly responded "no" and advised them to drop the idea. I walked out of the store. My friends were caught and were kicked off of the team among other consequences.

As I later reflected on that moment in time, I knew that stealing was wrong. I knew that it was against the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. I understood that one. *Thou shalt not steal* seemed straight forward to me. I grew up in a strict Catholic, God fearing, law-abiding family. But I don't recall any of that influencing my decision.

I was very close to my paternal grandfather. I was his first grandson and naturally his favorite. We did everything together. He and grandma owned a small country general merchandise store. He was the most generous person that I have ever known. He was always helping someone in need, especially large families that were in rough times. Grandpa had recently discovered that two teenage boys, from a family that he had once helped, were stealing gas from his store. He caught them and felt that he had to follow through with their parents and with legal proceedings. He felt that it was for their own good. But it was devastating for him!

At the moment of decision in that five-and-dime store that day, all I could think of was how grandpa would feel if he knew that I was involved in stealing. All that mattered at that moment was the fact that I did not want to disappoint my grandpa. I knew that it would break his heart. That thought process trumped my parents, the Ten Commandments, the Church and everything else. Hundreds of times in my life I have reflected on that foundational moment. As a CPA I was often put in a position where someone was asking me to do something that would cross the line of law or ethics, and I refused.

My grandpa has been gone for nearly 50 years. His voice is still in my head, "Right is right and wrong is wrong." I still do not want to disappoint him.

