

Third Sunday of Lent



A Prayer for Courage

God our Creator,
who gave your Son
zeal for your house
and a keen sense of justice,
inspire us to challenge
whatever is not fair for your people.
Give us courage, strength, and boldness
for times that demand it.
Help us follow the desire of your Son,
giving due reverence
to your temples of worship
and your human temples
where you dwell within us.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God
for ever and ever. Amen.

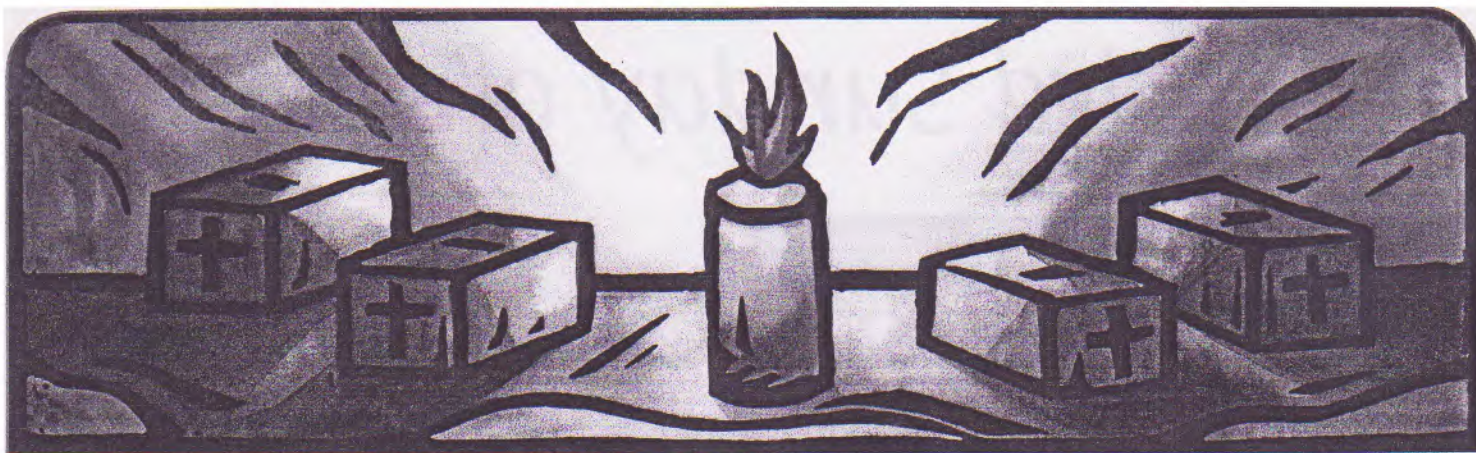
Sunday, March 11, 2012 A Strong Attack on Evil

Today's Readings: Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11 (John 6:68c); 1 Corinthians 1:22–25; John 2:13–25. Today's Gospel stands in healthy contrast to some sentimental popular portraits of Jesus as a sort of "flower child." One author demonstrates how misleading such portrayals are: "Who would seek to arrest and execute such a sap? What Jesus said and did was infinitely more threatening," and, we might add, more interesting!

Here, Jesus is angry, strong, unsparing. If we've ever had doubts about the value of legitimate anger, he sets those to rest now. What an affront to his beloved Father's house Jesus must have sensed in the Temple that day! The vendors of animals for sacrifice were unscrupulous, taking advantage of the peoples' genuine needs.

The last two lines of the Gospel show that Jesus understands the depths of human evil, rejecting simplistic notions like "Let's all just be nice." Sadly, he is prophetic about human nature: the evil he sees now will eventually grow into rage, and it will culminate in his Crucifixion.

While it's easy to be critical of the Jerusalem Temple structure, it's harder to identify the areas of stagnation in our own lives. What creative changes do we oppose because they might disrupt our cozy routines? Jesus' action comes as a good Lenten reminder: the processes of prayer, study, reflection, service, and growth last a lifetime, and they will always need deepening and redirection.



This Week at Home

Monday, March 12

Jesus in Our Midst

Today's Readings: 2 Kings 5:1–15b; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4 (see 42:3); Luke 4:24–30. In today's Gospel, we read: "When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage" (Luke 4:28). The peoples' reaction to Jesus mirrors his anger at the money changers in the Temple. A note of resolution comes in the last line: "But he passed through the midst of them . . ." (30). Despite religious feuds, Jesus can always be found in our midst. How do we honor him there? Does a family member need more attention? Does a teacher, coach, or coworker deserve our appreciation?

Tuesday, March 13

The Hard Work of Forgiveness

Today's Readings: Daniel 3:25, 34–43; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9 (6a); Matthew 18:21–35. Jesus' answer to how many times we should forgive wrongs is a number that scholars say represents infinity: 77 times (Matthew 18:22). Jesus' subsequent parable engraves the message of forgiveness on our hearts. Many have been helped by the Sacrament of Reconciliation to unburden the heavy weight of unforgiven wrongs. Check when it's scheduled at a parish nearby and participate. Also, find out what services your parish provides to forgive and help healing after abortion.

Wednesday, March 14

Fulfilling the Law

Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Psalm 147:12–13, 15–16, 19–20 (12a); Matthew 5:17–19. Today we hear Jesus say that he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Halfway through Lent is a good time to take stock. How have you made this liturgical time your own? Have you taken advantage of opportunities for prayer and service in your area? Are you persisting in prayer, almsgiving, and fasting?

At home, consider strengthening the Lenten ambience by changing the symbols or accents on your table or in your prayer space.

Thursday, March 15

Silent Meditation

Today's Readings: Jeremiah 7:23–28; Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9 (8); Luke 11:14–23. In explaining how he casts out demons, Jesus says, "the kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20). Meditate on this line in silence, asking yourself the following: How has the kingdom of God come to me? Where do I most notice God's presence in my everyday routine? Where do I want to find God more clearly and directly? If you are so inclined, talk through your answers with a close friend or spouse.

Friday, March 16

The Word Becomes Flesh

Today's Readings: Hosea 14:2–10; Psalm 81:6c–y8a, 8bc–9, 10–11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28–34. Jesus' direction to "love one's neighbor as oneself" (v. 33) can inspire you this week. Where have I failed to notice a relative who needs encouragement, a neighbor who is homebound, or a friend who is depressed? How can I translate Jesus' words into action this week?

Saturday, March 17

Optional Memorial, Saint Patrick

Today's Readings: Hosea 6:1–6; Psalm 51:3–4, 18–19, 20–21ab; Luke 18:9–14. The words of the hymn quoted below are attributed to Dallan Forgaill, who lived in the eighth century. The music is an Irish folk tune. Find all the words to this hymn, with music, so that you can sing along at <http://nethymnal.org/>. "Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart/Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art./Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,/Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light."



© 2011 Liturgy Training Publications. 1-800-933-1800. Written by Kathy Coffey. Illustrated by Paula Wiggins. Scripture quotations are from *The New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Quotation in the Sunday reflection is from Nathan Mitchell in *Real Presence*, LTP, 2007. The hymn "Be Thou My Vision" was translated from ancient Irish by Mary E. Byrne, 1905, versed by Eleanor H. Hull, 1912, alt., and is in the public domain; see <http://nethymnal.org>. Permission to publish granted by the Archdiocese of Chicago on September 28, 2011.

Keeping the Seasons

Reproducibles for Lent-Triduum-Easter 2012