

Third Sunday of Lent, B

Refrain... Have Mercy O Lord, have mercy on us

Introduction...

We are in Lent...

Lent is a time of preparation for our high holydays...

the Sacred Triduum... Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

What does Lent mean to us?

During Lent we can also ask:

"How am I doing as a Catholic, and as a follower of Jesus?"

We will recommit ourselves to our Baptismal promises at our Easter Mass.

So during Lent we ask, "How am I doing?"

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I The Centrality of God

Let's take a look at today's Scripture readings to see if they can help us answer this question.

The first Scripture reading from Exodus speaks of the centrality of God in the lives of God's people.

We ask ourselves:

Is God a part of our lives?
How central to our lives is God?
Is God just an afterthought on a busy day?

As we look at the first Reading
we see that God gave Israel 10 Commandments for His people to follow...
not suggestions, but commandments.

The first three Commandments deal with the place of God in the life and
heart of the people of Israel.

Notice that these first three Commandments are the longest and most
detailed of the Ten Commandments.

Perhaps it's because people have a tendency to place other gods or idols on
the throne of their hearts...

1st Commandment: Do we worship any strange gods?

Some people worship money, others power, others sex, others fame.

Do any of these strange gods sit on the throne of our hearts?

Do we worry too much about money or self-image or packaging ourselves to
appear important and recognizable?

We might ask how much money do we spend a month on clothes or
grooming or makeup?

Is my life too much about me – a constant buzz on commercials which would
have us worry too much about ourselves?

2nd Commandment: Do we take God's name in vain?

Do we give our loving God the reverence and worship God is due?

Is our God too tame, making no demands on us,
merely there to be approached to solve our problems.

Is God present in our lives each day to be worshipped?

In the morning do we wake up and say "Good God, morning?" –
or "Good morning God, I offer this day to you whom I love and worship, and
thank for this new day"?

3rd Commandment: Do we keep holy the Sabbath?
Do we worship God and spend time with God and God's community on
Sunday...
or are we at times too busy doing other things?
Do we participate actively at Mass on Sunday,
because we want to express our love and adoration of God?
Do we try to pay attention and follow the prayers?
Do we try to sing – or at least hum along?

I know that at times people are distracted.
Would you believe that even I get distracted during Mass?
As soon as I realize this I gently bring my mind and heart back into the
present and what is happening now.
Before Mass I offer God everything that is bothering me,
any of my fears or burdens.
I try to leave them at the altar before Mass,
so that they don't cause me distractions during Mass.
Of course, that means that I get into the Church a little early to quiet my
mind and heart.
Why do I do these things?
Because Mass is about my worshipping God with my brother and sister
Catholics...
God desires and is worthy of our worship.

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II Chasing the Money Changers...

Today in the Gospel we look at Jesus' action of cleansing the Temple where the Father is worshipped...

clearing the Temple of things that just don't belong there.

In our Lenten examination of conscience as disciples of Jesus we can ask:

Is there anything that doesn't belong in my lives and in my hearts as disciples?

Is there anything that's in the way of my following Jesus?

Is there anything robbing me of peace of mind and heart?

What do I need God's help with?

What can I ask Jesus to remove from the temple of my hearts?

At times our hearts are burdened by fears, or by anger and resentments, or by jealousies or by past hurts.

These can be real burdens, taking up much of our time and energies... our peace of mind and our joy of heart.

This reminds me of a story:

Feeding the Wolf

A native American grandfather was telling his grandson about the terrorist attacks.

He told him that now it felt as if there were two wolves fighting in his heart, a wolf filled with love and compassion and a wolf filled with hatred and revenge.

His grandson asked him if he knew which wolf would win the fight and the grandfather said, "Whichever one I feed."

What do we feed in our hearts?

With the help of our Lord Jesus we will not feed...

resentments, worries, fears, jealousies, past hurts.

Leave them at the altar before the Mass begins!

As we turn our minds, hearts and voices to our loving God whom we have come to worship and adore,

let our hearts feed on kindness, joy, serenity, peacefulness and generosity.

Aren't these the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised?

Can we claim these gifts?

Feed *them* and *they* will grow!

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Conclusion

We come to this Mass in this Season of Lent,

recognizing that we are not perfect, that we are sinners.

We don't have to pretend we are saints – few of us are.

We stumble while on our journey.

However, we also know that Jesus has gone before us on this journey, and that He accompanies us even now.

We don't have to deny our sinfulness,

nor pretend we are sinless,

or excuse our sinfulness as if it were ok.

We realize that this Church is not a museum for saints, it's a hospital for sinners.

We can lift our eyes to the Lord, seeing Jesus' love for us and Jesus' care and compassion for us, even though we are sinners.

At Communion time we say, "Lord I am not worthy..."

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Jesus says, "Come anyway."

We come to this communion table asking Jesus to give us the strength to follow Him and live as he would have us live.

We ask Jesus to help us to support and encourage each other in our Christian journey.

We thank the Lord for his many blessings, especially for the friends and family that help us along our journey.

We realize how great is God's amazing grace that supports us and enlivens us each day of our journey.

Let's conclude by singing about God's Amazing Grace...

Sing... Amazing Grace...