

Homily: 3rd Sunday of Lent Cycle B: 2024: Ex 20: 1-17; Ps. 19; 1 Corth 1: 22-25; Jn. 2: 13-25

“The Divine Gift of the 10 Commandments as the Way to True Life”

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 these acts of goodness, in a spirit of penance, 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.** The 10 Commandments which we hear about in the 1st reading this weekend, and of which the whole Catholic moral life is built upon as a rock foundation (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church part 3), is the path that leads to true life and love. *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 1st and the 3rd Commandments. And 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** of cleaning out of the Temple by Jesus should remind all of us to keep Sunday holy (3rd Commandment) and not to set up other things in our lives as gods (1st Commandment). *I’m sure the Lord is not pleased today with all the buying and selling that takes place on Sunday in our country; Sunday 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/ school studies we didn’t get finished during the week. How are we doing in this regard?* Lent is the 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. And to keep it holy going forward.

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.* Remember 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 His grace from within by the Holy Spirit:** *in our mind, heart, will and imagination and memory.* This universal call to spiritual transformation 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! See the books *The 3 Ways/Ages of the Spiritual Life* by Fr. Reginald Garrigou LaGrange for more insights into this dynamic of growth in true holiness.
3. **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 Lord who loved us so much that He died for us. When we sin, 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, big and small, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lenten season especially with our Penance service coming up - 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.✠