



Jesus said, "Destroy this temple
and in three days I will raise it up."

JOHN 2:19

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 7, 2021

Feast of Faith

Postures of the Mass

In the Mass, we pray not only with our lips, but with our bodies as well. We stand when the ministers enter. In Western culture, standing is a sign of attention, a mark of respect: all stand when the judge enters the courtroom, for example. Standing is also an ancient posture of prayer, mentioned frequently in the Old Testament. When the readings begin, we sit down: a listening posture. Mary sat at Jesus' feet to listen to his teaching; the crowds sat on the hillside or the seashore to hear his words. Kneeling is another posture that is full of meaning. It expresses adoration and worship, but it can also express humility and contrition. We bow: a sign of honor and reverence, acknowledging the presence of God, especially when we receive the Eucharist. And there are other ritual gestures as well—striking the breast, genuflecting, and of course making the sign of the cross. The liturgy invites us to pray with our whole person—with heart and mind, voice and body.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Total Allegiance

In previous weeks we have seen how the theme of covenant—as a preparation for the baptismal covenant celebrated at Easter—occupies an important place in our cycle of Lenten readings. The notion of covenant as a relationship between two parties carries with it an expectation of mutual accountability and fidelity to the terms of the covenant. When God forged the covenant with the Jewish people on Mt. Sinai, it was a pledge of God's protection, and it would forever permit them familiar access as the Chosen People. For their part, the Jewish people were to observe the dictates of the law, summarized most succinctly here in the form of the Ten Commandments. To be in a covenantal relationship with the Lord God requires an exclusive relationship, just as discipleship with Jesus—ritualized in baptism—demands a total allegiance to him and none other.

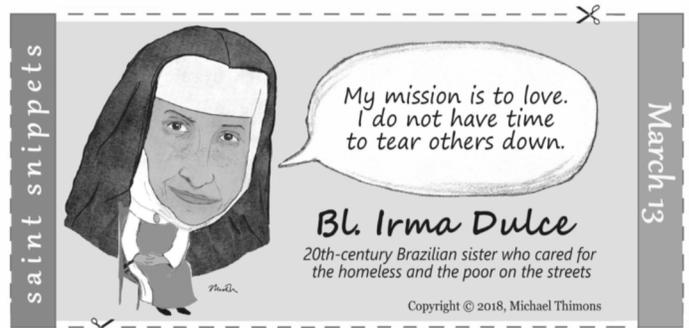
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	2 Kgs 5:1-15b; Ps 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Lk 4:24-30
Tuesday:	Dn 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25:4-5ab, 6-7bc, 8-9; Mt. 18:21-35
Wednesday:	Dt 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Mt 5:17-19
Thursday:	Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95:1-2, 6-9; Lk 11:14-23
Friday:	Hos 14:2-10; Ps 81:6c-11ab, 14, 17; Mk 12:28-34
Saturday:	Hos 6:1-6; Ps 51:3-4, 18-21ab; Lk 18:9-14
Sunday:	2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23; Ps 137:1-6; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21 Alternate readings (Year A): 1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Ps 23:1-6; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41[1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38]

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Third Sunday of Lent; First Scrutiny
Monday:	St. John of God
Tuesday:	St. Frances of Rome
Friday:	Abstinence



Today's Readings

First Reading — The law was given through Moses (Exodus 20:1-17 [1-3, 7-8, 12-17]) or Exodus 17:3-7.

Psalm — Lord, you have the words of everlasting life (Psalm 19) or Psalm 95.

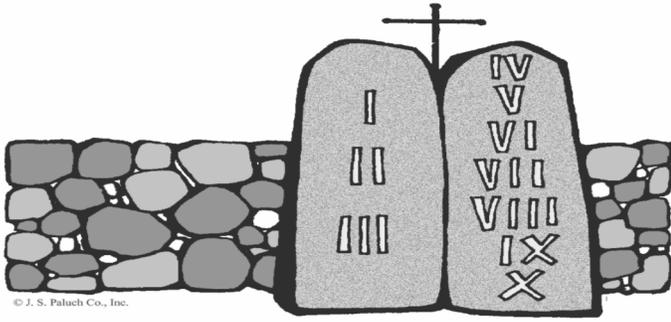
Second Reading — We proclaim Christ crucified; the foolishness of God is greater than human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22-25) or Romans 5:1-2, 5-8.

Gospel — Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (John 2:13-25) or John 4:5-42 [5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42].

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**Third Sunday of Lent
March 7, 2021**

**I, the Lord, am your God...
You shall not have other gods besides me.
—Exodus 20:2a, 3**



Treasures From Our Tradition

On this Sunday, our attention is drawn to an enriched diet of scripture readings in the liturgy's three-year cycle. Forty years ago, there was merely one set of readings for Sunday: two readings only, an Epistle, and a Gospel. Each Sunday of the year had two readings, and they never varied from year to year. In the late 1960s, we received an enriched book of readings (a lectionary) keyed to a course of readings over three years, named A, B, and C. The architects of this new plan realized that in Jesus' time, it took three years to read through the Law and the Prophets completely in synagogue worship. With the renewed liturgy, our worship has embraced this same rhythm that Jesus experienced in public prayer. This year we are using the readings from Year B. The readings for Year A, however, are closely attuned to the Church's work of preparing to celebrate baptism at Easter. When the worship assembly includes people in the final stages of preparation, the Year B readings will often be set aside in favor of the readings from Year A, which this week include the story of the woman at the well. She is a fitting companion for those thirsting for living water.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

As we are now well into Lent, we can take a look at what it means to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel. A good place to start would be the Ten Commandments. The reading from Exodus presents us with one of the first listings of the Commandments. In this passage, God explains some of the laws to show how serious they are. For the first one, God includes making images to be used for worship. Now you might jump to the conclusion that all the statues and crucifixes in our churches must be destroyed. Not so. In the days of Moses, people of other cultures made images of their gods and declared that the image was the god, and so should be worshipped. The LORD wanted his people to remember that God cannot be limited to an image or idea. That is still true today. Our images and statues are meant to help us pray to God, not to that work of art. In that sense, they are no worse than using a beautiful sunset or mountain scene to help you pray. On the other hand, some people give a superstitious meaning to religious articles. Burying a statue to help sell your house could be one example. If you want to ask for a favor from God, just ask Him. God is much more likely to listen to a sincere prayer than a superstitious action. The reason God gives for the first commandment is that he is a passionate God, who has chosen the Israelites to be his people. When he punishes sin, he allows the effect of our bad choices to hurt us and those around us. But when we repent and change our ways, his love is everlasting. God also emphasizes some commands by duplicating them. He tells us not to steal from others, and also not to plan to steal from our neighbor. The same with adultery: Planning it is just as bad as doing it. Taking his name in vain originally meant perjuring yourself after taking an oath to tell the truth. That is similar to the eighth commandment about false witness. Jesus simplified all these commands when he reminds us to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. Let's remember that as we turn away from sin to serving God better during Lent.

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