

Third Sunday of Lent
† Sunday, 7 March 2021



In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments

Keynote: Called – to experience the wisdom of God in a life of faith

Book of Exodus 20: 1-17

The people of the Old Testament made a covenant of moral obedience with God and so they must observe the Law and the Decalogue – the Ten Commandments. ‘*God spoke these words: “I am the Lord God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me.”*’ The Commandments may be summarised as the rules of life: to love God above all things, and one’s neighbour as oneself. These historic, tried and tested ‘God Values’, offer a basic pattern for human moral behaviour that serve us to this day. Slaves everywhere have no identity, no freedom, and no self-respect. But by ‘signing up’ to the wisdom of God, committed in faith and service to the moral values of God, all of us are liberated – set free in a real way, and able to build the kingdom – the reign of God – in our time.

Responsorial Psalm 18 (19) – A song in praise of God the law-giver

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 1: 22-25

As the apostle Paul travelled widely throughout the Mediterranean world he will have met many philosophers, ‘seekers after wisdom’. Many debated with Paul about the message of the Gospel he preached. Such seekers after knowledge – scientists and philosophers – are still to be found. ‘*While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here we are preaching a crucified Christ,*’ says Paul ‘*to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God.*’ Some enquirers demand signs or miracles, others rational proof or logical argument, but Paul offers them the apparent contradiction of the crucified Jesus. ‘*For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.*’

Gospel according to John 2: 13-25

‘*In the Temple Jesus found people selling cattle, sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters.*’ This passage is a vigorous display of Jesus’ zeal for the holiness of the House of God, and the detestation of those who would defraud the poor for their own selfish ends. ‘*Making a whip out of some cord, Jesus drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers’ coins, knocked their tables over, and said to the pigeon-sellers, “Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father’s house into a market.”*’ The Temple of God can also be seen as a reference to Jesus’ own body later to be abused and to be subjected to the suffering of the passion and death by crucifixion.

At the same time we might reflect that our own bodies are ‘temples of the Holy Spirit’ and ask ourselves what use we make of them, or whether we abuse the rights of others. John’s account also provides us with a reflection upon the meaning and significance of this new age, which dawns with Jesus beginning his public ministry, and which will culminate ultimately in death and the powerful sign of the Resurrection. ‘*When Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered... they believed the scripture and the words he had said.*’

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NOTE: Readings Year A to be used when the Scrutiny of the Elect is celebrated