

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT 2018

*"For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,
and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."*



FROM THE READINGS

Exodus 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17

God spoke all these words ... "You shall have no gods except me.

You shall not utter the name of the Lord, your God, to misuse it ...

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Honour your father and your mother ... You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor ... anything else that is his."

1 Corinthians 1:23-25

... Here we are preaching a crucified Christ ...
For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,
and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 2:13-25

Jesus ... drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

REFLECTIONS

The first three of the 'Ten Commandments' summarise the others: we must love God and love others as ourselves. These relationships and loves – for God and others – cannot be separated. The final seven outline what we must not do if we are to protect these relationships.

Jesus accepted and went beyond the commandments of Exodus. A vulnerable Crucified Christ, powerless by human standards, revealed an extravagantly loving God of boundless self-giving. When Jesus demanded that the temple be cleared, he asked for inner and outer sacred spaces to be left free for us to encounter the loving presence and wisdom of this God. The crowded mess of ambition, the focus on money and things and constant activity – can fill those spaces and steal our joy.

Some of the suffering is because of the effects of sin.

So much of the violence from which all of creation suffers comes from greed and misuse of power. When we choose to live in ignorance and prejudice, we choose to remain in darkness. From this kind of darkness we need protection and healing. There is also the suffering of sickness and death that leaves gaping holes of grief in our souls. This form of darkness can end up working for our good because it teaches us lessons of vulnerability and trust. We learn to put our faith in God and in those who care for us. In our ... prayer, then, we pray for protection as we remember the darkness all over the world and the many places where our sisters and brothers may be in danger of harmful confrontations, violence, wrong choices and suffering.

Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 159-160

If you want to be free of yourself

you must build a bridge over the gulf
of loneliness your selfishness has found, and look beyond.
Listen to another, and especially, try loving him or her and not just "me."

Dom Helder Camara in Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings, 100

FROM POPE FRANCIS

My friends, Jesus is the Lord of risk, he is the Lord of the eternal 'more'. Jesus is not the Lord of comfort, security and ease. Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy that is born of God's love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy.

Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 26-27

You might say to me: Father, but I have my limits, I am a sinner, what can I do? When the Lord calls us, he doesn't worry about what we are, what we have been, or what we have done or not done. Quite the opposite. When he calls us, he is thinking about everything we have to give, all the love we are capable of spreading. His bets are on the future, on tomorrow. Jesus is pointing you to the future, and never to a museum.

Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 26-28

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

From your reading: What important messages for Christian living can you find?

Translate to life:

Is there anything that can steal your real freedom and joy?

How could you realistically put these messages into action in your own life?

Express the heart:

Find words or an image for

- Insights gained from these readings and reflections
- A hope or intention for the future.

ONE HOUR FOR A GROUP

- **Begin with a short prayer**, asking God's presence and guidance.
- **Time with the Text:** Allow quiet time for reading and reflecting. ~15 mins
- **Discussion:**
 1. Each person shares a key insight from their reading and reflection. 10 mins
 2. General Discussion. 30 mins
- **Concluding Prayer Together**
eg. 'Prayer' from this leaflet, a traditional prayer, or your own words.

PRAYER

Consoling God,

be a source of serenity for me
when struggles and difficulties
threaten to overwhelm me.

God of hope,

assure me of your unconditional love
when I doubt myself
or question the worth of my life.

Truth-bringing God,

encourage me to embrace you
during those times when I get lost
in the lies of my weakness.

Compassionate God,

hold me to your heart
when I feel helpless
in the face of the world's pain.

Light-filled God,

shelter me under your wings
when I am engulfed in sadness
and overcome with distress.

God of peace,

you are the centre of my life,
a strong refuge of peace
in the whirlwind of my pain.
I look to you for strength
and a constant assurance of hope.
Amen.

'In Difficult Times' by Joyce Rupp, Out of the Ordinary, 48



Prepared by: Adult Faith Education Sandhurst PO Box 201 Bendigo Vic 3552. E: adultfaith@sandhurst.catholic.org.au **Acknowledgements:** Joyce Rupp, *Out of the Ordinary*, Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2010; Francis McDonagh, *Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings*, Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009; Macrina Widederkehr, *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, Notre Dame Indiana: Sorin Books, 2008; Bishop Brendan Leahy, *Dear Young Friends: Pope Francis in Conversation With Young People* Mulgrave, Victoria: Garratt Publishing, 2017