

# Read

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

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## LIVING THE WORD

### Third Sunday of Lent

March 7, 2021



#### REFLECTION

The final words of today's Gospel are truly extraordinary. Jesus did not need to learn about human nature from someone else. He himself understood it well, but it is sometimes easy for us to forget this reality. We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, but what does that mean? Take some time to reflect on the holistic Gospel narrative. What are some of the things that make Jesus fully human? Among others, Jesus cried when his friend Lazarus died, showed anger when people were abused power in the Temple, and ate with his friends on multiple occasions. None of this lessens Jesus' divinity. Rather, it gives us the opportunity to be in special relationship with Jesus. Because Jesus knows what it is like to be human, he is personally familiar with your own experiences.



#### ACTION

Ignatian spirituality emphasizes a personal relationship with our living, loving God. With that, Ignatian prayer uses a combination of imagination and personal reflection. Choose your favorite Gospel story and place yourself within it. Use your senses. What do you see, hear, smell and feel? Imagine that Jesus is speaking to you as a character in the story. What does Jesus say to you? What do you say to Jesus? Tell Jesus what is on your heart. Don't be afraid to be honest and vulnerable. Remember, Jesus knows what it is like to live a human life. After you finish the conversation, write down some of the things that you remember from your conversation with Jesus.



Learn more about Ignatian spirituality by visiting:  
[https://www.ignatian  
spirituality.com/](https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/)



#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How would you have reacted to seeing Jesus' actions in the Temple?
- ❖ Where in your life have you felt the compassion of Christ, who has experienced pain, joy, fear, and love?



March 7, 2021

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### LECTIONARY #29B

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

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

This week we find Jesus acting strangely. Filled with zeal and righteous anger, he overturns the money-changer's tables and drives out the livestock from the Temple. He sees that the original meaning of the Temple has been lost. People have strayed from worshipping God. We must drive out the sins in our lives that keep us from God. At the heart of our faith is a relationship, not an ideal or a concept. Nourishing our relationship and loving Jesus is the heart of our religion.

**Q FOCUS:** *To rid ourselves of things that get in the way of our relationship with God.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

For those who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil, this Sunday marks the first of three scrutinies they will undergo (the other two occurring on the Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent). These scrutinies are a series of prayers and blessings made over these individuals, asking God to help them turn away from sin and commit themselves to following the way of Christ. Even if your parish will not be baptizing anyone at the Easter Vigil, it is important to keep these people in your prayers, since we are all part of the one Body of Christ.

### Church Teaching Connection

"We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. . . . In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel's faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth" (*Deus caritas est*, 1).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.**

### Gospel

John 2:13-25

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and 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." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, *Zeal for your house will consume me.* At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show

us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

In this Sunday's Gospel, we encounter Jesus in cleaning mode. Entering the Temple, he sees people buying and selling livestock and exchanging money and gets very upset. Now, this isn't the first time Jesus has seen this in the Temple. He has gone to the Temple countless times and has probably seen these folks before. But today he chooses to act.

► **When have you seen an injustice so many times that you finally decide to act?**

In order to understand why Jesus became so angry, we need to learn a little more about the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was God's dwelling place, where the faithful encounter God's presence and mercy. This was a very sacred place. It was the only place where sacrifices could be offered. During the time of Jesus, animal sacrifice was a part of the Jewish tradition, and was a way to offer worship to God. The moneychangers and livestock sellers were

there so that people from far away could make an offering, without having to travel with livestock. Traditionally, buying oxen and sheep and exchanging money were done outside the Temple, but over time, the practice entered the Temple itself, perhaps for convenience.

Gradually then, the house of God became a marketplace. Instead of a place of encounter with the holy, it had been reduced to a place of business. If you pay this price, you can get this service. This can have a disastrous effect on faith.

► **What problems might arise when we think of religion as a transaction rather than a relationship?**

► **How might someone think the Christian faith is transactional or like a business deal between God and the person?**

Jesus, angered by this practice, finally decides to act. Jesus overturns the moneychanger's tables and drives out the livestock. This action would have angered many of the religious leaders. It probably garnered a lot of gossip about who Jesus was. Sometimes we make concessions in the light of convenience and we stray farther away from the beautiful truths of our faith. We opt for easy, when the hard way is the right way.

Lent is a great time to examine and question our choices. Perhaps our intentions are good, but without actions that support what we know is right, we are not doing good. By turning away from what is wrong without trying to correct it, we are moving farther away from God. We could also be leading others away from God because we are not showing them God's love. We need Jesus in our lives to overturn the areas where we have lost our way. We need to do what is right and good, just as Jesus did.

► **In what areas might Christians take shortcuts in their faith for the sake of convenience?**

► **What things (at school, at home, etc.) are blocking you from encountering Christ and acting on God's Word?**

Today's Gospel passage helps us to see that indifference is a danger to our faith. When we ignore the little things, we are giving them permission to build up and become something that gets in the way of our encounter with God. In cleansing the Temple, Jesus

shows us that we need to see past the things that hold us back from acting on our faith. We need to clean up our lives so that we can see God more clearly. Jesus can help us overcome these obstacles that separate us from a loving relationship with him.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 146.*

**The Temple in Jerusalem was God's house, a place of encounter with the Living God, but over time it was made into a marketplace.**

**When we make our faith transactional, we lose the relational character of faith in Jesus.**

**Lent is a time to reflect on our choices and overcome the obstacles in our lives so that we can encounter Christ.**

## Act on the Word

### Flipping Our Priorities

*You will need at least two half-full plastic water bottles for this activity.*

This activity begins with a water bottle flipping contest. A half-full water bottle is thrown into the air so that it rotates, in an attempt to land the bottle upright on its bottom. Two teens can compete at a time, flipping the bottles at the same time. The one who gets their bottle to land upright first is the winner. You can add more bottles to the game if you want to have more interaction. You can even create a bottle flipping relay.

After the bottle flipping activity, invite the teens to reflect on what needs to be flipped in their lives. Just like the tables that Jesus overturns, there are places in our lives that need to be turned around. St. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3:16 "that you are the temple of the living God, and that the Spirit

of God dwells in you." Our temples need to be cleansed, just as the Temple in today's Gospel passage did.

Take some time to go through an examination of conscience during today's session. Invite the teens to focus on three areas of growth and cleaning. Specifically, how can they improve or strengthen their prayer life, what behaviors can they give up that are not bringing them closer to God, and where can they be more generous.

Encourage the young people to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many parishes offer additional times during Lent. If possible, plan to attend a reconciliation service together as a group.

## Closing Prayer

*Eternal God,  
throughout human history,  
you have chosen to be present wherever  
your people are.*

*In the fullness of time,  
you sent Jesus to be the temple of God  
among us.*

*Help us to be living stones always joined  
to the cornerstone, Jesus Christ.*

*Who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends. If your parish will be celebrating the second scrutiny with those preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil, the Year A readings may be used. The handout and session for the Year A readings are found in the appendix of this book on pages 243-246.*