

You give us this joyful season of Lent
to prepare us to celebrate the Paschal
Mystery
with mind and heart renewed.
- Preface for Lent I

Third Week of Lent: March 15-21, 2009

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The Third Week of Lent

For the **Third Sunday of Lent** we read the Ten Commandments and witness Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple. He says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." **John's Gospel** tells us the point: "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." In most parishes, there will be one Liturgy for the RCIA candidates, using the [Gospel of the Woman at the Well](#).

Thursday is the **Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, with its own special readings.

Jesus challenges the people in his hometown of Nazareth to look at him in a new way - "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." In a fury, they drive him out of the temple. Peter asks Jesus the limits of forgiveness. Jesus says that we must forgive again and again. He tells the parable about the servant, who though forgiven himself, does not forgive his fellow servants. Jesus has come to fulfill the law and the words of the prophets, not abolish them. When asked to name the "greatest" commandment, Jesus names two, thus putting together the necessity of loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbor as our very selves. The week ends as Jesus tells a powerful story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

For the **Fourth Sunday of Lent** we read Jesus' words to Nicodemus in the **Fourth Gospel**.

Daily Prayer This Week

This is a pivotal week of Lent. We can solidify the patterns we have begun or we can make a new start, if we haven't been able to get started yet. If we have begun to recognize what needs realigning in our lives and have begun to fast and abstain from some things that get in the way of our relationship with the Lord, then we are engaging in a struggle. We are likely uncovering resistance and experiencing our personal sinfulness face-to-face.

This is all preparing us for a deeper conversion, a readiness for reconciliation with God and the graces that will allow us to be a source of reconciliation with others. This is the time when we begin to see and experience how much God loves us at a new and more personal level. These graces prepare us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus in the weeks ahead - to learn from him, to fall in love with him more deeply and to be drawn to imitate him more completely. If we are just getting started with our Lenten journey, renewing our desires for these graces, will be all we need to begin with a renewed openness. God does not need a lot of time to convince us of his love for us.

This is a week about God's love for us and our call to love others the same way. It is a time blessed by our gratitude for the fidelity of Joseph and Mary, who responded to God's fidelity to them. It is a week to keep our daily focus on naming a desire each morning. The day ahead will shape what we ask for as our feet hit the floor in the morning. Pausing to thank the Lord for this day and to ask for the grace to let our mind and heart be renewed in the concrete circumstances, relationships and obligations of our day. Throughout the day, we can then return to those desires in background of our awareness. Our request for the Lord's help is

Jesus will be lifted up on the cross to heal us from the power of sin and death. This gospel, which is written like a trial, tells us the verdict. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

always there and our consciousness of it, will help us make the choice we desire to make, to let go of what we need to let go of, to add what we need to add. This will take us deeper and deeper into self-awareness and a sense of our need for a Savior, who is right there to embrace us and give us the graces we ask for.

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