

But the tax collector stood off
at a distance
and would not even raise his
eyes to heaven
but beat his breast and
prayed,
'O God, be merciful to me a
sinner.'
Luke 18

Third Week of Lent: Feb. 24 - March 1, 2008

The Third Week of Lent

For the **Third Sunday of Lent** we read of the Samaritan woman who encounters Jesus at the well. He offers her lifegiving waters and then shows her how intimately he understands her. She runs back to town to spread her news: "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?" At some Masses, we will hear the [Scrutinies](#) for RCIA candidates.

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. Jesus heals a demon that wouldn't let a man talk. When someone claimed that Jesus must be using Satan's power to heal. Jesus responds with words that have a double meaning: there is only one source of grace; it is from God and it resists evil; there is only one source of evil; it is from Satan and it resists God's grace. 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."

The **Fourth Sunday of Lent** brings the story of the man born blind. His disciples ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus heals the man who now sees more clearly than the Pharisees the true identity of Jesus. "I do believe, Lord."

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 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.