

## **Blessed are the Pure in Heart: for They shall see God (Matthew 5:8)**

**Lectio Divina of the Third Sunday in Lent (February 8/2021)**

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**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for this evening to meditate on your life giving words. Although we are sinners, you came in mercy to aid us by sending your Son Jesus to redeem us from our sin and lead us to glorious eternal life. We thank you for justifying us in your presence. We pray that your words remain in us so that we remain in you and bear good fruit. Cultivate in us the fruits of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, so that we may lead a righteous life. Create in us a pure heart, pure motives, pure desires, pure thoughts and renew a steadfast spirit within us. Lord, we want to store so much of your goodness in our heart that it overflows and pushes out all impurities. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**I Reading: A Reading from the book of Exodus 20:1-17**

In those days, God delivered all these commandments: “I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers’ wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments. “You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. For the Lord will not leave unpunished the one who takes his name in vain. “Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. “Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him.”

**(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** At the foot of the Mount Sinai, God gave 10 commandments to His people. What was the necessity of commandments? It was a real necessity for the people of Israel because they had just come from Egypt, a land of many idols and many gods. The command, ‘you shall not have other gods besides me’ is to tell them to worship and believe in Him. The rest of the commandment were designed to lead Israel to a life of practical holiness. In the 10 commandments, they saw the nature of God and his plan for how they should live. The commandments and guidelines were intended to direct the community to meet the needs of each individual in a loving and responsible matters. The ten commandments were the constitution of the people of Israel which tied them to the God who made covenant with them. They were based on two basic principles, namely, the principle of reverence and the principle of respect which Jesus summarize in the Gospel as love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40)

Responsorial Psalm. (John 6) ***Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;  
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.  
***R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.  
***R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just.  
***R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold;  
sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb.  
***R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

## **II Reading: A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 1:22-25**

Brothers and sisters: Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

**(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** Many Jews considered the Good News of Jesus as foolish because they thought the Messiah would be a conquering king accompanied by signs and miracles. Greeks to considered the gospel foolish: they did not believe in bodily resurrection. They

thought that no reputable person would be crucified and to them, death was a defeat, not victory. The Good News of Jesus and his simple and humble characteristics may sound foolish even now to those who worship power, influence and wealth but St. Paul is very emphatic saying that the humble suffering and the crucified Jesus is our power who alone can save us and nothing else and knowing him is our our greatest wisdom.

### **Gospel Reading: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John 2: 13-25**

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.

### **(The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ / Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)**

**Meditation on the Cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple by Jesus Christ:** The Law of Moses demanded every Jew to go to Jerusalem Temple for three important Jewish feasts: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacle. When they visited, they were expected to offer sacrifice at the temple and the preferred sacrifice was a lamb. If anyone who cannot afford a lamb is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the Lord as the penalty for their sin offering and burnt offering. Since the journey to Jerusalem was often long and tedious, bringing a goat, sheep or cattle (or a dove for the poor) to be slaughtered, would have been most difficult. So the temple authorities put up booths in the courts of the gentiles to sell the sacrificial animals at high prices to the pilgrims who came from far. They were making lot of money from the pilgrims who came to worship. Apart from the booths for selling animals, the money changers had their own booth to change the Roman currency 'Denarius' to the temple currency 'Shekels' because only Shekels was accepted in the temple because every Jew who completed 20 years was obligated to pay Temple Tax (Ex 30:11-16). Thus the temple which was expected to be a place of prayer and worship, simply became a place of commerce, exploitation and exclusion of the gentiles which angered Jesus terribly to the extent that he became very violent. Everything except prayer and worship was going on. The temple authorities simply

desecrated the temple by their commercial activities and exploiting the poor and excluding the gentiles. Jesus could not stomach all these illegal and irreligious activities in the holy temple. Thus he protested all non religious activities very vehemently using his physical force. He wanted all the non-religious activities to be stopped so that the temple becomes a place of prayer and worship for all people.

**Jesus is the Temple:** When the Jews raised objection to his act and asked for a sign, Jesus said, “Destroy this Temple and I will raise it up in three days”. He spoke of his body as a temple. He became the temple in NT. His name was Immanuel. He was “I am who I am” in the New Testament. Thus all those who believe in Jesus became the temples of the Holy Spirit. Each of us is a living temple created by God in His image. We are reminded of this often, by the outward signs of the sacraments and the liturgy. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We didn't simply become sons and daughters of God. Our spiritual heritage was purchased at a great price, the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross. We must guard, build, and embellish this loving temple so that we become living sacrifices to Christ.

**How to become living sacrifices?** It is by our inner cleansing by following the Ten Commandments. The summary of the Ten Commandment is the love of God and love of our neighbors. When we make a serious examination of conscience on the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church, we will be able to see who we are inside. Jesus cleansed the temple from all sorts of defilements on the feast of the Passover. As we are preparing ourselves for the feast of the Passover, the Lord invites us to make a good confession, a spiritual cleansing of our mind and heart to have our Lord's presence. Holiness is nothing but God's presence in our life.

**Concluding prayer:** Loving Father, we love You and trust You and we desire to be set apart unto You, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. We desire to be holy for You are holy and You have called all of us, Your children, to be set apart unto You and to be refined in the refining fires of Your purifying love and grace, so that we may come forth as pure gold in Your sight when our earthly journey is over. Lord, we realize that we cannot do this in our own strength, but only in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can change our life and become more and more like Your Son Jesus. Bless us that we may always walk in your truth and justice. May whatever we do please You and honor Your Holy name. Help us to keep our outward actions and inner thoughts pure before Your eyes wherever we are. May we bear witness to the powerful words of your Son Jesus: ***Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*** May our personal, family and Ecclesial life always resonate with words of St. Paul: ***Whatever is true, Whatever is honorable, Whatever is just, Whatever is pure, Whatever is lovely, Whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things*** (Phil 4:8). In Jesus' powerful name, We pray. Amen.

(Hail Mary...Blessings)