

# Third Sunday of Lent: March 7, 2010

### Scripture:

Meanwhile Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. . . God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." . . [T]he LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. . . God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

(Exodus 3:1-2,4,7-8, 15)

### Quote:

The world you are inheriting is a world which desperately needs a new sense of brotherhood, sisterhood, and human solidarity. It is a world which needs to be touched and healed by the beauty and richness of God's love. It needs witnesses to that love. It needs you—to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Remarks by Pope John Paul II, Papal Mass (July 7, 2002), no. 3

### Reflection:

In the book of Exodus, Moses allows himself to become God's vehicle so that God's message of truth and freedom can liberate God's people. Today we can consider where our voices are needed to speak out before injustice, and how we might follow Moses' example to become modern-day prophets bringing "salt to the earth," and light to the world.



### Prayer:

Listening deeply to the voices in need around us is the work of each of us and an act of solidarity. Seeing the beauty around us is an act of worship. Let us to be salt and light to an earth greatly in need of healing. Let us lovingly respond when God calls our names and needs our voice to speak God's truth.

### Fasting:

- Fast from using your prayer time with requests. Instead, try to listen in the silence to God's voice. Which of God's suffering communities has touched your heart? Where does God call you to serve?

### Almsgiving:

- The American Community Gardening Association builds community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across the United States and Canada. Find a community garden near you.

Website:

**Community Gardens Database by State**

Address:

<http://www.communitygarden.org/connect/links.php>

## Monday, March 8, 2010

### Scripture:

And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

(Luke 4:24-30)

### Quote:

[W]e must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activity and especially in the sector of world society, if justice is really to be put into practice. Our action is to be directed above all at those people and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice.

World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* (1971), no. 20

Work tirelessly so that the Gospel will penetrate ever more profoundly in the heart and life of believers, inviting the faithful to assume increasingly their responsibility in society, in particular in the field of the economy and politics, with a moral sense nourished by the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bishops of Rwanda* (May 22, 2005)

### Reflection:

Sometimes it is said that in order to keep everyone comfortable, one should never bring up politics or religion, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, however, of our obligation to tirelessly "invite" the faithful to work for just political and economic systems that uphold, instead of oppress, those in poverty.



### Prayer:

God of hope, make us attentive to opportunities to put justice into practice in concrete ways. Help us wake up the injustices around us. Give us patience to listen to those suffering injustices. Grant us courage to speak up and stand with the victims of injustice.

### Fasting:

- Today, make an effort to fast from unnecessary spending on food, goods or services that are not essential. Make a conscious choice to go without and live with less.

### Almsgiving:

- Catholics Confront Global Poverty. USCCB and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) call on one million Catholics in the United States to confront global poverty. Advocate with us to end hunger, disease, conflict, and other issues that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.

Website:

**Catholics Confront Global Poverty**

Address:

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/>

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

**Scripture:**

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt."

(Mt. 18: 22-30)

**Quote:**

Reducing debt is an act of justice and an "important challenge" faced by future generations. It would be unjust if the leaders of today neglected their responsibility and made the consequences of their choices or their lack of action weigh on generations that will come in the future. It is a question "not only of healing the economy but also and above all a question of social justice. Righting the nation's accounts moreover presupposes offering a more secure context to economic activity and defending the most poor and vulnerable populations."

Pope Benedict XVI,  
"Reducing Debt, A Duty of Justice" (December 20, 2008)

**Reflection:**

Debt forgiveness has a strong basis in both the Old and New Testaments, as Pope John Paul II reminded us during the Jubilee Year of 2000. Growing awareness and advocacy has certainly brought positive debt relief to some countries, but many poor countries are still paying billions of dollars in debt service, which severely limits or cancels basic services for their citizens. Basic human and economic rights for millions of people depend on our continuing support of the call for debt forgiveness.



**Prayer:**

God of forgiveness, You call for a time of restoring the land and forgiving debts. We long for this restoration in our global community and for your justice. Help us to continue to raise our voices for those in poverty and to call the leaders of the developed world to accountability. We have not finished the work of jubilee, but with your guidance and grace, we will continue this important work in joy and hope. Amen.

**Fasting:**

- Fast today from concerns about our own financial situations; consider, instead, what it means to be a family in a country that is paying millions in debt interest and to have no schools, no hospitals, no social services available for your children.

**Almsgiving:**

- Visit the website of Jubilee USA, an alliance of faith and community groups that promote debt forgiveness for developing countries. Learn especially about the call for debt forgiveness in Haiti.

Website:  
**Jubilee USA**  
Address:  
[www.jubileeusa.org/](http://www.jubileeusa.org/)

## Wednesday, March 10, 2010

### Scripture:

Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live ... Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

(Deut. 4:1, 9)

### Quote:

Far too many Catholics are not familiar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith. This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church.

U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (1998)

### Reflection:

Learning about Catholic Social Teaching, like any essential element of our faith, is important not only so that we ourselves can experience the fullness of faith, but so we may communicate its richness and depth to future generations. Consider how your faith community can fully share the gift of the Church's social teaching.

### Prayer:

Christ the teacher, open our eyes and ears to receive the gift of Catholic Social Teaching. Help us to see, reflect and act on the call to help bring to life a world of justice and peace. May we seek the common good of all and act in solidarity on behalf of those who are poor and marginalized. May we bring hope to a world in need through our awareness, action and loving witness.

### Fasting:

- Today, fast from your regular routine and take time to reflect on some of the passages of the social teaching.

### Almsgiving:

- The document "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching" focuses on the need to teach CST widely.

Website:

**Sharing Catholic Social Teaching**

Address:

[www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.shtml)



## Thursday, March 11, 2010

### Scripture:

When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer. Therefore say to them, "This is the nation that has not obeyed the Lord its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips."

(Jeremiah 7:27-28)

### Quote:

[Hunger and malnutrition are] also caused by humans themselves and by their egoism which is translated in deficiencies in the social organization, the rigidity of economic structures too often geared only to profit, and also practices against human life and ideological systems that reduce the person, deprived of his or her fundamental dignity, to be but an instrument.

Pope Benedict XVI, Message to the director general of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, Oct. 16, 2005

The Church invites all Christians to take up a double task of inspiring and of innovating, in order to make structures evolve, so as to adapt them to the real needs of today.

Pope Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, (1971), no. 50

### Reflection:

Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets preached God's word to stubborn people who continued to turn away from God. Today, with entrenched structures benefitting the rich and powerful, many will not, do not want to, hear about change and transformation. How do we support our modern prophets crying out in the wilderness of suffering, oppression and violence? Where are opportunities for us to form a prophetic call?



### Prayer:

Lord, give us vision to become your prophets so truth will not perish in the land. Fire us with your passion for justice, so we can inspire and innovate, so we can challenge structures and systems that do not serve your children. Help us see that together we can become a strong voice for a transformation of values, so the dignity of every person is held higher than profits.

### Fasting:

- Today, fast from despair. Do not allow yourself to feel hopeless about unjust and entrenched economic and social structures and systems, but remember models of transformation, such as Ghandi, Dr. King, John Paul II, and how they helped change powerful structures and systems.

### Almsgiving:

- The Agribusiness Accountability Initiative, cosponsored by the Center of Concern and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, explores ways to transform the current structures that prevent food security for all.

Website:

**The Agribusiness Accountability Initiative**

Address:

<http://www.agribusinessaccountability.org>

## Friday, March 12, 2010

### Scripture:

One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that (he) answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

(Mark 12: 28-33)

### Quote:

The unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor is emphasized. One is so closely connected to the other that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbour or hate him or her altogether. Saint John's words should rather be interpreted to mean that love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2006), no. 16

### Reflection:

The commandment to love one's neighbor appears throughout the New Testament. In the Luke 10 version, the man asks Jesus "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. How does this parable challenge us today? Who do we find it difficult to call "neighbor" and to reach out to?



### Prayer:

God of unity, open our ears to hear and understand the words of John Paul II: "We are one human family: love of your neighbor has global dimensions in an independent world." Open our hearts so we are willing to learn to love your global human family.

### Fasting:

- Fast today from negative attitudes about people you do not want for neighbors. Pray for them with open hearts.

### Almsgiving:

- The Catholic bishops of the United States have called for passage of comprehensive immigration reform. **Justice for Immigrants**: is a national campaign that calls us to become "neighbor" to the stranger in our midst. JFI has developed a series of resources that discuss a wide range of topics related to immigration and reform efforts.

Website:

**Justice for Immigrants**

Address:

<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/>

## Saturday, March 13, 2010

### Scripture:

For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts or burn offerings.

(Hosea 6:6)

### Quote:

This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, (1965), no. 26

Justice never makes love superfluous. Beyond justice, humans will always need love, which alone is able to give a soul to justice.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to the readers of Famiglia Cristiana*, Feb. 5, 2006

### Reflection:

Jesus Christ suffered and died because of his great love for the children of God. We can learn from Christ the strength, the patience, the possibilities of love. Lent is a time when we can move more deeply into the mystery, and power, of love.

### Prayer:

Animate us with great love, O God, that we may use our energy and creativity to help build a new world, with new possibilities for the human community. Deepen the love in our hearts day by day.

### Fasting:

- Choose to fast from indifference which is the negation of love. Identify a social justice issue that you care passionately about and take action to make a difference.

### Almsgiving:

- Read Dr. M. L. King's sermon on the transforming power of God's love as the foundation for transforming injustice.

Website:

**Dr. Martin Luther King's Archive**

Address:

[http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/pauls\\_letter\\_to\\_american\\_christians/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/pauls_letter_to_american_christians/)

