

Homily for March 7, 2021

The Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, are both the building blocks and the summary of the whole Old Testament Law which is Israel's part in the covenant relationship with God. As Christians, we understand that The Ten Commandments express our calling to love God and neighbor. And when we speak to others who do not belong to our faith, we can show them the Ten Commandments as essentials to any good life. They express a framework upon which we can speak of basic ethical norms to people no matter their religious or cultural persuasion.

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I speak today particularly about the eighth Commandment:
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

On the level of a courtroom, when two or more people are at odds, this is a basic necessity for law and order. Just and fair judgements can only be made if people are speaking truthfully.

On the level of natural law, as one of the three "Transcendentals" (of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty), Truth is an objective reality which our consciences call us to learn and live. The purpose of language is to discover truth, to speak truth, and to communicate love of God and neighbor. People are to do good and avoid evil in all communications. All of this is at risk – and no society can last - if people cannot trust what each person is saying.

And on the level of our Christian Mission, Christ is Truth. It is our vocation to share the truth of His Kingship in our hearts and our lives, and to invite others to the forgiving salvation He offers.

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All Ten Commandments are a basic structure around which many Examinations of Conscience are formed. A major part of this season of renewal is repentance of our faults.

Some of you may have heard of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, which was formed in Eighteen forty-four (1844) under the name "Apostleship of

Prayer.” Since the eighteen ninety’s (1890’s), the Holy Father has offered at least one monthly world-wide intention that we are asked to pray with him. Pope Francis has alternated his monthly intentions as either a “Universal Intention” or an “Intention for Evangelization.”

This month of March, his intention is on Reconciliation. It is:
“Let us pray that we may experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.” [on the “Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network website]

One thing that I noticed about this prayer is that the pope has labeled this as an Intention for evangelization.

As we are told, human sin “...is contrary to human fraternity and charity. We need the grace of God’s infinite mercy in order to reject this pride and return to humility.” It is only in living in the joyful and grateful humbleness of having received God’s infinite mercy that we can be witnesses of Christ to the world.

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A quick note about our gospel reading today. The Cleansing of the Temple takes on a special focus when talking about Reconciliation and Penitence. As one commentator [Bishop Mueggenborg] points out about this event:

“Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke all place this moment at the end of Jesus’ ministry, John places it at the very beginning and as one of our Lord’s first public actions. In doing so, John is telling us that the cleansing of our temple has to be one of the first actions we experience as disciples of Jesus. This is an important message for us during this Lenten Time.”

The gospel today tells us Christ was talking about the temple of His body being destroyed and rebuilt. By our Baptism, we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, and our bodies are made Temples of the Holy Spirit.

The ancient Temple area had all the business and busyness going on for an original good purpose – to help those who had come to sacrifice correctly according to the Law. But these activities had become distractions and impediments to the reason for the Temple.

In all the busyness and business of our lives, it is easy for us to be distracted and led away from the reason for our lives, which is union with God.

In this Holy Season, we have the opportunity to let Jesus upset a few tables in our hearts, and call us back to be prayerful houses of the Father. It is my hope that Lent is proving to be a renewal of zeal for the Lord for all of us.