

## Reflections March 7th-11th

### March 7th Monday

Today's first reading is the reading by Moses to the Israelite people of the ten commandments from God. This is important because without a moral code how could people know what it meant to be made in God's image. God works in baby steps and took the Israelite people over thousands of years trying to mold them into followers of love and God. This first step was a good start for the Israelite people but was focused on what to not do, not what to do. By saying what not to do He was telling them what to do as the opposite. These basic ten commandments are the bulwark of moral law and a great starting point. One would do well by following them. But Jesus was sent to tell people more than what not to do. He was the model of love and how love works in this world. In the Gospel of Matthew he says that if we do not love others in this world, we are not loving Him and there are dire consequences (hell) to that. It is our love of others that shows our love of Jesus by doing what he did on this earth. Talking about the love of Jesus is not enough to gain heaven, we must act on it and become involved in this world. Actions speak louder than words!

### March 8th Tuesday

Words are important and matter. They matter when they are heartfelt and meant. They achieve their purpose when people say them with love and understanding. In our first reading Isaiah says God sends his Word to earth to be obeyed and acted on. He expects us to follow his Word as that was His intent. In today's Gospel, Jesus models good prayer by giving the apostles and us the "Our Father" prayer. He stresses the part on forgiveness and says we must forgive others or we will not be forgiven our transgressions. This is not a maybe or should be request. It is a brutal fact. Don't expect to go to heaven unless you forgive others in your lives. It doesn't get any clearer than that.

### March 9th Wednesday

Today's first reading gives us the middle of the story of Jonah and the power of God's forgiveness. The part of the book before this reading is Jonah's attempt to avoid the mission God gave him to go to his greatest enemy and tell them to repent of their sins. He was not afraid for himself but because he knew God would forgive them which is the last thing he wanted for his mortal enemy. He wanted God to destroy them, not forgive them. In the Jonah reading today he has returned to Ninevah, the city of his mortal enemy, and begrudgingly goes about giving God's message of the need for their repentance. He has hardly started his mission when everyone decides to repent to avoid God's punishment. Needless to say Jonah is not happy. He preferred their destruction. In today's Gospel Jesus refers to Jonah when the Pharisees doubt His mission and ask for an indisputable sign that Jesus is really God and is who he says he is. He may be referring to the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the whale after he tried to run away from his mission. This is like Jesus' three days in the tomb before the Resurrection. Or it could mean that Jesus came for forgiveness of us not condemnation, as long as we repent. Either way He says what they should see in him is bigger than David or Solomon, both very rich Israel kings. The Pharisees wanted no part in that declaration just as Jonah wanted no part in God's mission of forgiveness for all.

March 10th Thursday

Today we hear Bible stories about the prayer of petition. We all ask God for help in times of our lives and we wonder if God is really listening and really cares. We have our doubts. Sometimes we ask wrongly. We demand help or we just assume help without any effort on our part to resolve our needs. Sometimes we tell God what we want him to do and how to do it. Asking in humility is the best way to ask God for help. How would any parent react when their child demands something they know may not be good for them or even if it is, the tone of the asking affects the result? Trusting God knows what is best for us and how to resolve our difficulty is the best prayer and one of humility. In our first reading the Israelite judge, Ruth, does exactly that. She humbly asks for God's help even though she has her doubts and

doesn't tell God how to solve her problem, just that he does and He did! In today's Gospel Jesus speaks of the same thing. He says God wants to help us always. He does not give snakes when we ask for an egg. He knows what is best for us and will answer our prayer in the best way. Sometimes the best way is to say no to our request at the immediate time and deliver the answer later or to give something even greater for us that is better than we were asking for. If you live long enough to look back on your past life you might be able to see in hindsight that even though at the time of the asking it seemed God was ignoring you, what eventually happened to you was the best thing that could have happened even though you didn't think so at the time. I once had to give up a great job due to unjust politics in my business and I early on wondered why God did not help me keep that job. even after I asked him. I see now several years later that this supposed bad event motivated me to do something else which ended up better than what I had then. The bad event changed my life for the better, now that I look back on it in hindsight. God knew what was the best way to help me out of the situation I was in and it was to leave and do something else that was even better. I would not have been a deacon today if that supposedly bad event did not happen. So let us remember to trust God, that he knows what is best for us and when we pray for his help, do it with humility and leave the problem solving to Him rather than telling Him what and how to solve it. After all He has the best PHD in knowledge of the world!

March 11th Friday

Today's first reading emphasizes that good timing is important. What happens at the end of our lives is more important than what happens earlier. When we die, and we all will, our judgment is frozen at that moment. The condition of our soul at the moment of death determines where we will spend eternity, in heaven or hell. God through the prophet Ezekiel says that if someone is very evil all their lives but "truly" repents before their death they will enter heaven. In the New Testament we have confirmation of that with the "Good Thief" story at the cross when Jesus died. The criminal repented sincerely to Jesus at the last minute on the cross and Jesus said the criminal would be with him in paradise that day.

How you end your life is the most important time of your life. Ezekiel also says that if someone is very good all their life, like a Mother Theresa, but at the end of it changes their mind and disavows God and the good and becomes very evil, he does not get credit for the previous good he has done. Doesn't seem fair, right? We are different in one way from than the angels in that we can ask forgiveness for our bad decisions and actions as long as we are alive. The angels only had one chance and will never get another. God knows how difficult it is to be human and how we succumb so easily to sin. He has experienced the temptations of the devil and know his cunning and power over us. Because of that, we are given the chance to repent all the way until our death. Which is worse, betraying God at the end of our life without repentance or betraying God early on seeking repentance before death? I think most would say the latter. Now before you think to yourself that you can do all sorts of bad stuff all during your life and then at the end repent and get a "get out of hell card" in the monopoly game of your life, don't count on it. You may not get a chance to repent if you die in your sleep or die suddenly. On top of this, sin has a way of keeping us sinning and true repentance is harder the more we sin. Let's face it, most of the time we like our sins or we wouldn't do them, right? We choose to sin because it seems to be good for us. Even if you don't die suddenly without a chance for repenting, you may get so entrenched in your sins that wanting to be with God forever doesn't appeal anymore to you because you prefer the life of sin to repentance of what you like. Don't gamble with your eternal future, better to repent early and often which is why Jesus instituted the sacrament of confession to help us. He gives us redo's, as many as we need or want, so we get in the habit of avoiding sin rather than being addicted to it. Don't count on the timing of the good thief, after all not all of can roll sevens at the right time in the Las Vegas of life!