

## Third Sunday of Lent (A) – 08.03.2026

*Ex 17,3-7; Rom 5,1-2. 5-8; Jn 4,5-42*

**Jesus Christ, our Lord, shares His life with us. May His endless love be with you!**

### INTRODUCTION

We come to this celebration just as we are—perhaps thankful for our health and life, but perhaps also feeling weighed down by the ways we are not as we wish before God. Maybe we feel we fall short with our partner, our children, or in our work and relationships. Perhaps life has not gone as we hoped.

I once read of a small village where the only well had dried up. People searched everywhere, but finally, one child noticed a tiny trickle of water in a forgotten corner. With patience, care, and a little digging, the villagers restored the flow of water. Life returned slowly, but surely, and the whole village was refreshed. God meets us in the same way. Even when we feel unnoticed, broken, or empty, He

sees our thirst. He invites us to drink deeply of His love and His mercy.

Let us open ourselves to His love, which has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, who shares His life with us and offers us the living water that refreshes our hearts and souls. May His endless love be with you!

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, You speak words that refresh and give life, like living water to the weary soul. **Lord, have mercy.** You never stop reaching out to us, seeking us again and again, even when we wander. **Christ, have mercy.** You want to give us guidance and strength for life, leading us through all trials and temptations. **Lord, have mercy.**

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May our good and faithful God, rich in mercy and love, forgive us all that separates us from Him. He restores our hearts, heals our wounds, and refreshes our spirits with the water of life. May he lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

## COLLECT

Almighty God, source of all life, you refresh the earth with your waters and sustain us with your Spirit.

Just as we need water to live, we need your life-giving Spirit each day, especially in moments of thirst, weariness, and doubt. Help us to encounter your Spirit in simple ways—through a kind word, through those who care for us, through moments of silence and prayer—and help us to share this living water with others, as Jesus did. Teach us to be channels of your love, joy, and mercy, so that the world may be renewed by your Spirit. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns... Amen.

## HOMILY: “Water That Never Runs Dry”

Anyone who stands in a beverage store in front of the shelves of mineral water faces a real dilemma, confronted with a vast variety of different kinds of water. From sparkling to still, low in sodium, table water, spring water—everything is available for purchase. “Not all water is the same.” When I reflect on today’s Gospel, this simple

observation takes on a deeper meaning. The evangelist John describes the encounter of a woman from Samaria with Jesus at Jacob’s well in Sychar. Both speak of water, but somehow they talk past each other. “Not all water is the same,” Jesus seems to say—not all thirsts are alike, not all relief is lasting.

Imagine a young child in a desert, running barefoot under the scorching sun. Every step is heavy, every breath hot. Suddenly, in the distance, the child sees a glimmer—a well. Relief floods the heart, hope quickens the pace. The child reaches the well, cups hands into the cool water, and drinks deeply. The thirst, for the moment, is gone. But after a while, the thirst returns. Life is like that. We find temporary relief in many things—success, relationships, possessions—but the deepest thirst in our hearts remains.

Today’s Gospel presents us with a story of thirst—not a physical thirst, but a thirst for life, meaning, love, and God. The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well comes at noon, probably seeking a simple drink of water. She expects only a routine encounter. But Jesus surprises her: “Give me a

drink.” A small, human request, yet it opens a doorway to something extraordinary.

### **Water Is Not Just Water**

At first, they seem to speak past each other. She speaks of ordinary water, he speaks of living water. Jesus gently tells her, “Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst again.” Ordinary water satisfies for a moment, but the water He offers quenches our deepest longings. John’s Gospel shows us that water in Scripture is never just water—it symbolizes life, renewal, and God’s love. Psalm 42 puts it beautifully: “As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God.”

Like the woman, we all have a thirst. Perhaps we thirst for happiness, recognition, or love. Perhaps we are weary of life’s dryness, its broken promises, its fleeting joys. And yet, the Living Water Jesus offers transforms that thirst into fulfillment, joy, and purpose.

### **The Unexpected Messenger**

What is remarkable in today’s story is not just the water,

but the woman herself. Marginalized, judged, undervalued—she could have easily gone unnoticed. And yet, Jesus chooses her as His messenger. She becomes a source from which others may drink. Her encounter inspires her to leave her water jar behind and run to the town, telling everyone: “Come and see the man who told me everything I ever did. Could he be the Messiah?”

It reminds me of a simple experiment: a young man asks strangers to borrow a phone. Some help immediately; others hesitate. The difference? A small, invisible bias. The experiment shows how often people are overlooked or dismissed. Yet, the Samaritan woman experienced the opposite: she was seen, truly heard, and respected. Her testimony drew many to faith. God often works in unexpected ways through unexpected people. Perhaps, like her, we too are called to be sources of living water in our communities.

Here’s another quick story: A young teacher once noticed a quiet student, always sitting alone, overlooked by classmates. One day, she asked him to read aloud in

class. His confidence soared, and he began helping other students. A small act of recognition became a ripple of life. That's exactly what Jesus did at the well—He saw someone others ignored, spoke to her deepest thirst, and she became a fountain for her entire town.

### **The Thirst for True Life**

We spend our lives seeking happiness. We try health, relationships, careers, hobbies, even adventures. Yet, like the child in the desert, temporary relief never lasts. Saint Teresa of Ávila reminds us: “Solo Dios basta”—Only God suffices. Saint Augustine echoes this: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in God.”

Jesus meets us in our ordinary routines, our “daily wells.” He comes to us where we are, in all our brokenness, offering what the world cannot—living water that transforms thirst into abundant life. Fasting, prayer, reflection during Lent are ways to open ourselves to this water, to notice the thirst we often try to drown with distractions.

### **Looking Beneath the Surface**

Many people ask, “How are you?” But rarely do we hear an honest answer. We wear facades, play roles, hide our struggles. Yet, like the woman at the well, we are invited to go deeper. Jesus looks beneath the surface. He sees our longing, hears our questions, understands our failures, and offers the water that truly satisfies. Our spiritual life begins when we acknowledge our thirst and let God fill it.

### **A Gift of Longing**

Every longing in our hearts is a gift. The child waiting for a birthday, the student yearning for adventure, the sick person hoping for comfort—these are all hints of a deeper desire. God plants these longings to lead us to Him. The Samaritan woman recognized hers only after meeting Jesus. Her ordinary task of drawing water became the extraordinary moment that transformed her life—and the lives of her entire town.

### **Becoming a Source**

Jesus does not just quench her thirst; He empowers her to become a source for others. This is the ultimate gift: our

encounter with God is never only for ourselves. It flows outward. Our families, friends, communities, even strangers, can drink from the living water that flows through us when we embrace God's love.

### **A Story to End With**

Years ago, I read of a town struck by drought. Wells ran dry, and hope was scarce. One woman, using a small hand pump, began sharing water with her neighbours, carefully rationing it. Her act inspired others, and together they dug, shared, and planned. Eventually, water returned to the town. One woman's willingness to share made the desert bloom.

So too, God's living water comes to us not only to satisfy our thirst, but to transform us into fountains for others. The Samaritan woman reminds us: ordinary moments, ordinary people, ordinary acts of openness and love—when touched by God—become extraordinary.

Dear sisters and brothers, this Lent, let us seek the living water. Let us go deeper than the superficial, embrace our

thirst, and share what we receive. Let us drink from the well of God's love—and leave our jars behind, so that others may come and drink too.

Amen.

### **INVITATION TO THE CREDO**

Like the Samaritan woman at the well, we have all experienced a thirst that the world cannot fully satisfy. Jesus offers us the living water that quenches our deepest longings and transforms our lives. Today, we are invited to respond to Him, to acknowledge our need for His love, and to profess our faith in the One who gives us life in abundance.

Let us now open our hearts and declare together our faith in Jesus Christ, the source of living water:

## **ALTERNATIVE PROFESSION OF FAITH (for personal meditation only)**

I believe in the One who gives living water:

- In the God who brought water from the rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites,
- In the God who led His people to a land flowing with milk and honey, where life could flourish.

I believe in the One who is living water:

- In the Son who offered the Samaritan woman pure love and understanding until she thirsted no more,
- In the Son baptized with the fiery water of the Holy Spirit, showing us the path of holiness and renewal.

I believe in the One who unites fire and water:

- In the Spirit who turns dull eyes into shining stars and opens our hearts to the wonders of God,
- In the Spirit who washes away our guilt, renews our courage, and restores hope in our lives.

This is my baptismal faith:

- I believe in the Father, the source of living water and eternal life,
- I believe in the Son, the living water itself, the companion who never abandons us,
- I believe in the Holy Spirit, where fire and water meet to pour forth new life and hope in our hearts. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Let us bring our gifts and offerings to the Lord, who refreshes us with living water. May this bread and wine become a source of nourishment and strength, not only for us but for all whom we meet on our journey of faith. Let us open our hearts in gratitude and humility, ready to receive God's mercy and grace.

## **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Good and loving God, we place this bread and wine on your altar, gifts of creation and symbols of our lives. Through these simple signs, draw near to us and help us

meet one another with open hearts, ready to forgive and support. Strengthen us with these gifts for the path that Jesus, your Son and our Brother, has shown us—a path of humility, service, and love.

Give us the courage to encounter you in the poor, the lonely, and the broken-hearted, and to share your mercy and joy generously. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you are the source of all life and every blessing. In the midst of our daily thirst, our struggles, and the weariness of our hearts, you offer us living water through your Son, Jesus Christ. He meets us where we are, even in our doubt and loneliness, and calls us to new life. In Him, the outcast is welcomed, the weary are refreshed, the sinner forgiven, and the humble exalted. In His words and deeds,

your mercy flows freely, drawing all people to the hope and freedom of your kingdom.

Through Him, your love renews creation: the parched land becomes a spring of blessing, the dry soul finds refreshment, and hearts thirsting for justice and truth are filled with courage. He teaches us to love one another, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to share the gifts we have received. In Him, we recognize the fullness of your plan for humanity, your faithful care that never fails, and the joy that comes from living in communion with you.

And so, with all the angels and saints, we proclaim the glory of your name, as without end we raise our voices in their unending hymn of praise:

## **INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER**

With full trust, we turn to God as “Father” and pray together, as Jesus taught His friends, confident that He hears our prayers and walks with us every step of our journey.

## **EMBOLISM**

Lord, may this sacrifice we offer, together with the prayers of your Church, rise before you. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Strengthen us with the living water of your grace, that we may quench the thirst of the weary, bring hope to the desolate, and be witnesses of your love in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Let the joy we experience at this table overflow into our daily lives, so that our actions may lead others to encounter you. We ask this, as we await in joyful hope the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus, you are the source of true peace, the water that refreshes our hearts and calms our restless spirits. Grant that we may live in harmony with you, with one another, and with all creation. Where there is conflict, may we sow reconciliation; where there is despair, may we offer hope; where there is misunderstanding, may we extend

patience and understanding.

Guide our hearts to be instruments of your peace in a world that thirsts for mercy, justice, and love. Let your Spirit teach us to forgive, to listen, and to care without expectation, so that our lives reflect your living water and eternal love. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are invited to His table, for here we find forgiveness, healing, and strength. Blessed are those called to the supper of the lamb.

## **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

We have drunk from the living water of Christ. Let us now go forth as channels of His mercy and love. Small acts of kindness—a listening ear, a gentle word, a helping hand—can be streams of life to those who are thirsty for hope. Our hearts have been renewed; let us be instruments of that renewal in our families, communities, and the wider world.

## **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Good God, you are like a bubbling spring for our lives. You feed us, give us strength, clear our minds, and inspire new ideas. You renew our courage every day.

Our hearts are restless until they rest in You. See our longing for happiness and security.

Have mercy on our poverty and emptiness.

Fill us with your care, love, and blessing.

Keep our thirst and hunger for your love alive, and strengthen us to share it freely with all.

We ask this through Jesus, our Brother and Lord. Amen.

## **FINAL BLESSING**

May the Lord, who walks with us through every desert of life, strengthen you with courage and hope.

May He refresh your spirit with the living water of His love, giving you patience in trials and joy in simple moments.

May He guide your steps as you share His mercy with the world, blessing your family, your friends, and everyone whose path you cross.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, fill your heart with peace, your home with love, and your life with renewed purpose. Amen.

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

## **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT**

Drink deeply of God's living water, and let your life become a source of refreshment, hope, and love for everyone you meet this week. Do not underestimate small acts of kindness—they are rivers of life in a thirsty world.

## Monday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent – 09.03.2026

2 Kg 5,1-15; Lk 4,24-30

### INTRODUCTION

A teacher once admitted that hearing the truth from a student—spoken respectfully but boldly—made her uncomfortable. In that moment, she felt exposed and defensive. Yet, with time, she realised that this honest correction did not weaken her authority; it strengthened trust and helped her grow. Truth, when spoken in love, can unsettle us before it heals us.

Today's readings speak of that same unsettling truth.

Naaman, a foreign military commander, is healed by God when he humbly listens. Jesus, in his hometown synagogue, reminds his own people that God's saving love cannot be claimed as a privilege or restricted to those who feel entitled to it. God's mercy crosses borders, challenges assumptions, and refuses to remain confined to what feels familiar or safe.

As we begin this Eucharist, we are invited to look honestly at our own hearts. Are we open to a God who surprises us,

who loves beyond our expectations and comforts? Are we willing to hear a truth that may disturb us, yet ultimately sets us free?

Let us place ourselves before the Lord, asking for the grace to welcome his mercy and to be changed by it.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters,

the Lord comes to widen our hearts and to heal what we resist.

Let us acknowledge our sins and ask for his mercy.

**Lord Jesus**, you speak a truth that calls us to conversion.

*Lord, have mercy.*

**Christ Jesus**, you reveal a God whose mercy knows no boundaries.

*Christ, have mercy.*

**Lord Jesus**, you invite us to love as generously as you love.

*Lord, have mercy.*

## PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,  
who is rich in mercy and patient in love,  
forgive us when we close our hearts to his truth,  
heal us when fear hardens our spirits,  
and lead us into the freedom of his forgiving grace,  
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## COLLECT

God of boundless mercy,  
you cleansed Naaman the foreigner  
and spoke your saving truth through your Son,  
even when it was rejected.  
Free us from narrow hearts and fearful faith,  
and teach us to rejoice in a love  
that reaches every people and place.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## HOMILY – Monday, Third Week of Lent

A few years ago, a small-town teacher shared this story: one day, a student boldly told her the truth about a mistake she had made in grading. She felt embarrassed, even upset at first. But later, she realized that the student's honesty had helped her improve her work and strengthened the trust in their classroom. Speaking the truth openly can be uncomfortable and even thankless—but it can also bring clarity and growth.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus speaking truth in a way that is both bold and challenging. When he visited the synagogue in Nazareth, the people expected comforting words, maybe stories of familiar miracles, or promises that God favoured their town and nation above all others. But Jesus told stories about the prophets Elijah and Elisha helping outsiders—the widow in Sidon and the Syrian commander Naaman—showing that God's love is not limited to Israel. Suddenly, God was not their exclusive God; God's mercy extended beyond borders, beyond nationality, even to those considered enemies.

The people of Nazareth reacted with anger. Their expectations were shattered. They didn't want to hear that God could care for outsiders as much as for them. And yet, Jesus continued his path, undeterred, offering a vision of God's love that is generous, indiscriminate, and expansive. He challenges us in the same way today: to reflect honestly on our own image of God. Do we limit God's love to those we like, those who share our background, or those who fit our ideas? Or do we embrace Jesus' vision of a God whose mercy reaches every corner of humanity?

Being open to Jesus' words is not always comfortable. Sometimes they confront our prejudices, our narrow thinking, or even our anger. Like the people of Nazareth, we might want to dismiss what challenges us. But the Gospel invites us to move beyond our initial reactions, to see the goodness in what we might first resist, and to let God's vision reshape how we live. Just as the prophets were instruments of God's love for those the world overlooked, we too are called to show mercy and kindness

without boundaries, revealing God's care to those who might feel forgotten or rejected.

I'll close with another story: a volunteer in a refugee centre shared that the first time he offered a warm meal to a wary newcomer, the person refused, suspicious and distant. But over time, small gestures of consistent care opened a door, and a friendship grew. God's love works in much the same way. Even when people initially resist, the truth and mercy of God persist, reaching hearts in ways we cannot always see. Today, let us open our hearts to Jesus' truth, and let our lives be signs of the inclusive, merciful love of God.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray, brothers and sisters,  
that our offering may help us surrender our limits  
and learn again to trust in God's generous mercy,  
for the good of all his people and the glory of his name.

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,  
accept these gifts we bring before you,  
and purify our intentions with them.  
May this offering free us from pride, prejudice, and fear,  
and make us instruments of your mercy  
for all whom you love.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For you are not the God of one people only,  
but the Father of all,  
and your mercy reaches beyond every boundary we  
create.  
Through the prophets you revealed your saving power,  
and in your Son you proclaimed a truth  
that disturbs the comfortable  
and heals the humble of heart.

When your Son was rejected by those who thought they  
knew him, he did not withdraw his love,  
but continued his mission of mercy,  
offering healing to the outsider,  
hope to the forgotten,  
and life to all who dare to trust.  
Therefore, with angels and archangels,  
and with all the saints who rejoice in your saving love,  
we proclaim your glory, as without end we acclaim:  
**Holy, Holy, Holy...**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Savior's command,  
trusting in a Father whose love reaches all his children,  
and daring to believe in a mercy greater than our fears,  
we pray:

## EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
especially from the fear that closes our hearts  
and the pride that limits your grace.

Grant peace in our days,  
that, helped by the mercy of your love,  
we may welcome your truth  
and live as instruments of your compassion.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you passed through rejection without hatred  
and spoke truth without violence.  
Look not on our fears and divisions,  
but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will.  
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sin of the world,  
who comes not for a few, but for all who hunger for mercy.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

### **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

The same Christ who challenged hearts in Nazareth  
now rests within us. His truth may still unsettle us,  
but his mercy heals more deeply than it wounds.  
Let us sit quietly with the grace we have received,  
asking for hearts wide enough to love as he loves.

### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Lord our God,  
you have nourished us with the bread of heaven.  
Strengthen us to live what we have received,  
so that your mercy may be seen  
in our words, our choices, and our welcome of others.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **FINAL BLESSING**

May God bless you with hearts open to his truth,  
even when it challenges you.  
May Christ strengthen you  
to love beyond borders and expectations.

May the Holy Spirit guide you  
to be signs of mercy in a divided world.  
And may almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace,  
glorifying the Lord by a life of generous mercy.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God's mercy is not diminished when it is shared—  
it is revealed.

**Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Lent – 10.03.2026**

*Readings: Daniel 3:25. 34–43; Matthew 18:21–35*

## INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, the world was shaken by the tragedy in Christchurch. In the face of unspeakable violence and loss, a man who had lost his wife spoke words that stunned many: *“I have no grudge.”* His response did not deny pain or suffering, but it revealed a strength greater than anger—a mercy that refused to let hatred have the final word. In that moment, we saw how forgiveness can become a source of healing, even in the darkest circumstances.

Today's readings invite us to look honestly at our own hearts. Like the servant in the Gospel, we often receive mercy more generously than we are willing to give it. God meets us again and again with compassion, cancelling debts we could never repay, and patiently giving us the time to begin anew. Yet we struggle to extend that same patience and mercy to others.

As we gather for this Eucharist, especially during this Lenten season, we come not as the perfect, but as those in need of

forgiveness. Let us allow God's mercy to touch us deeply, to soften our hearts, and to teach us how to forgive without counting the cost—so that our lives may truly reflect the mercy we receive at this altar.

### **PENITENTIAL ACT**

Brothers and sisters, trusting not in our own righteousness but in the mercy of God, let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you never tire of forgiving us.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you teach us to forgive without measure.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you restore us when we return to you with humble hearts. **Lord, have mercy.**

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May almighty God, who is rich in mercy and slow to anger, look upon us with compassion, forgive us our sins, heal what is wounded within us, and lead us to everlasting life.

**Amen.**

### **COLLECT**

God of endless compassion,  
you never turn away the sinner who seeks your mercy.  
Grant us the grace to know how deeply we are forgiven,  
so that our hearts may be freed from resentment  
and made generous in love and patience toward others.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **HOMILY: The Measure of Mercy**

I want to begin with a story that has stayed with me. After the tragic killings in Christchurch, a Muslim man in a wheelchair lost his wife, who had tried to protect him. The next day, when asked what he would say to the mass murderer if he met him, he replied with astonishing calm: *“I hope and I pray that he would be a great person one day. I have no grudge.”* Here was a man faced with unimaginable loss, yet he chose forgiveness. Such generosity of heart

leaves us humbled. In that moment, we catch a glimpse of God's mercy in human action.

Today's readings challenge us to reflect on that same mercy. In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of a servant who owed his king an enormous debt—ten thousand talents, a sum impossible to repay. The king, moved by compassion, cancels the debt entirely. Imagine the relief, the freedom, the overwhelming gratitude that servant must have felt. Yet, soon after, he meets a colleague who owes him a much smaller sum. Despite the generosity he himself has received, he refuses to forgive and has the man thrown into prison.

Why did he act this way? Why did the servant, who had experienced boundless mercy, refuse to show even a fraction of it to another? Perhaps he did not fully grasp the depth of what he had been given, or perhaps he allowed anger and pride to overtake his heart. Jesus' warning is clear: God takes our actions seriously. Our willingness—or unwillingness—to forgive reveals whether we truly understand and accept God's love and mercy.

Forgiveness is not easy. Peter himself asked Jesus, "*Lord, how often must I forgive my brother? Seven times?*" Jesus' answer startled him: "*Not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*" There is no limit to forgiveness, because God's mercy knows no bounds. We are called to mirror that generosity, not as a token gesture, but as a way of life. Like Asarja, one of the three youths in the fiery furnace, we are invited to remember God's mercy, to approach Him humbly, and to seek forgiveness for our own shortcomings. Only then can we truly extend mercy to others.

The parable also reminds us of the gift of time. When the first servant asked for time to repay his debt, the king freely granted it. Time can symbolize patience, understanding, and the chance to make amends. In the same way, offering someone time—holding back judgment—can be a profound act of mercy. Often, the greatest gift we can give another person is the gift of time, just as God gives us the time to return to Him and grow in His grace.

So, as we reflect this Lent, let us ask ourselves: How generous is our heart? Do we extend mercy as freely as it

has been given to us? Do we forgive not seven times, not just seventy-seven, but as often as it takes? The call of Jesus is demanding, yes, but it is a call to be God-like in love and mercy.

I want to close with another story. A young man once shared how he had deeply wronged a friend, yet, when he approached him seeking forgiveness, his friend welcomed him without anger. That act of mercy transformed the young man, not only restoring the relationship but opening his heart to God in a new way. Like the servant forgiven by the king, or the man who forgave the Christchurch shooter, we are invited to let mercy shape our hearts. And when we do, we reflect the limitless love of our Heavenly Father.

May we, this Lent, learn to forgive without counting the cost, to offer mercy freely, and to give time to those who need it—so that our hearts may mirror God's own.

## INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,  
that our offering, born of repentant hearts,  
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Merciful God,  
receive these gifts we bring before you,  
as you once received the humble prayer of your servants  
in the furnace.

Do not look upon our failings,  
but upon the mercy you have already shown us.

Purify our intentions, soften our hearts,  
and teach us, through this sacrifice,  
to forgive as freely as we have been forgiven.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For you are rich in mercy and patient in love.  
Again and again you forgive our debts  
and invite us to begin anew.  
In your Son, you have revealed a mercy without limits,  
calling us not only to receive forgiveness,  
but to become instruments of that forgiveness in the world.  
In this season of Lent,  
you grant us time—  
time to repent, time to heal,  
time to learn the ways of compassion and peace.  
By forgiving us, you teach us how to forgive;  
by showing us mercy, you shape our hearts to be merciful.  
And so, with angels and saints,  
and with all who have learned the power of mercy,  
we proclaim your glory, as we sing:

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching,  
let us pray with confidence to the Father who forgives us  
our debts and teaches us to forgive one another:

### EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
especially from hardened hearts and unforgiving spirits.  
Graciously grant peace in our days,  
that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you looked upon our poverty and cancelled our debt.  
Do not look on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will.  
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In receiving the Body of Christ, we receive mercy made  
flesh. As we return to our places, let us ask for the grace  
that what we have received with our lips  
may take root in our hearts— a mercy that heals, forgives,  
and gives others the gift of time.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God of compassion,  
you have nourished us with the Bread of mercy  
and strengthened us with the Cup of forgiveness.  
May this sacrament free us from resentment and fear,  
and make us living signs of your mercy in the world,  
so that others, through us, may come to know your healing  
love. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## FINAL BLESSING

May God, whose mercy has cancelled your debt,  
bless you with hearts generous in forgiveness. **Amen.**  
May Christ, who teaches us to forgive without counting the  
cost, strengthen you in patience and love. **Amen.**  
May the Holy Spirit soften every hardened place within  
you, and make you instruments of peace and  
reconciliation. **Amen.**  
And may almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace,  
forgiving as you have been forgiven.  
Thanks be to God.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Mercy received but not shared remains incomplete.  
This Lent, forgive—not by counting how often,  
but by remembering how deeply you are loved.

## Wednesday of the 3rd Week of Lent - 11 March 2026

*Deut 4:1,5–9; Matt 5:17–19*

*The Law fulfilled in love – God’s Word as a living foundation*

### INTRODUCTION

A teacher once gave her class a simple task: build a tower using ordinary wooden blocks. Some students carefully followed the instructions, placing each block exactly where it belonged. Others thought the rules were unnecessary and decided to build freely, trusting their creativity alone. At first, their towers looked impressive—taller, bolder, more daring. But before long, they began to lean, wobble, and collapse. In the end, the students learned an important lesson: the instructions were not there to limit them, but to give their creation strength and stability.

Life often works the same way. We sometimes see God’s commandments as restrictions, rules that hold us back or make life less exciting. Yet today’s readings remind us that God’s Law is meant to be a foundation—a guide that helps

us build lives that can stand the test of time. Through Moses, God gave his people a path to life, wisdom, and faithfulness. In Jesus, that path is not taken away, but brought to its fullness through love.

As we continue our Lenten journey, we come together to listen again to God’s Word, ancient yet ever new. In this Eucharist, we ask for the grace to trust the foundation God has given us, to respect what is good and life-giving in our tradition, and to allow Christ to shape our lives—not through fear, but through love that leads to lasting life.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, the Word of God shows us the way to life, yet we often choose easier paths. Let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to renew us in love.

Lord Jesus Christ, you give your mercy and grace.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Angels and saints praise you, and we lift our hearts to you.

*Christ, have mercy.*

You show us the way to the Father. *Lord, have mercy.*

## PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of mercy,  
who gave us his Law as a gift  
and fulfilled it in love through Jesus Christ,  
forgive us our sins,  
strengthen us to live his Word faithfully,  
and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

## COLLECT

Merciful God,  
renew us in spirit through the celebration of these holy forty  
days,  
so that we may be open to your Word,  
ready to obey and practice self-denial,  
united in prayer,  
and eager to do works of love.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## HOMILY: Completing the Law through Love

Once, a teacher asked her students to build a tower using simple blocks. Some followed the instructions carefully, stacking each block in the order shown. Others tried to improvise, ignoring the steps. At first, the improvised towers seemed creative, even exciting—but soon they wobbled and collapsed. The students realized that following the steps wasn't about limiting their imagination; it was about creating something that could stand, something that could last. Life, as in tower-building, requires a foundation.

Today's readings invite us to reflect on that foundation: the Law, the commandments, and the teachings God has given us. At first glance, laws and rules might seem restrictive—they tell us what we must or must not do. But without them, life would be chaotic. In the first reading, Moses reminds the Israelites that obeying God's Law is the path to life. The Torah is not merely a list of prohibitions; it is a guide to living well together, to creating a community

grounded in justice, wisdom, and love. Moses celebrates the Law as a treasure to pass from generation to generation, a source of life and understanding for all who follow it.

Jesus, too, honoured this tradition. In the Gospel, he declares, “I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them.” He takes what is good in the Jewish tradition and brings it to completion—not by ignoring or discarding it, but by showing its fullest meaning. Where the Law points toward justice and obedience, Jesus shows that its deepest fulfillment is love—love of God and love of neighbour. His Sermon on the Mount translates the commandments into everyday life, urging mercy, compassion, and care for those in need.

This perspective teaches us something important about our own lives and the Church. Just as Jesus recognized the good in the Law, we are called to see the good in our religious traditions, even when they seem imperfect. He doesn't start from scratch; he builds on what is already

there. Similarly, the Church is a living body, a community shaped by centuries of faith, sometimes flawed, always in need of renewal. Yet, God works through us to prune what is weak and bring to fullness what is good, guiding us toward the life-giving path of love.

We are invited to live as Jesus lived: respecting tradition, embracing what is good, and striving to bring it to completion in our daily lives. The commandments, the laws, the teachings—they are not chains that bind us, but stepping stones that lead to life. And the ultimate step is love: to see God in others, to act with compassion, to teach and guide through example.

I am reminded of a gardener who tended a neglected orchard. At first, it seemed impossible to restore. Yet she did not tear out every tree, nor abandon the orchard. She pruned what was sick, nurtured what was healthy, and over time, the orchard flourished, bearing more fruit than ever before. In the same way, Jesus calls us to nurture the good in our tradition, in our communities, and in ourselves, so that life, love, and wisdom may flourish in the world.

May we, like the careful builder and the diligent gardener, follow the foundation laid for us, respecting what is good, and bringing it to its full potential through love, mercy, and faithful action.

### INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

My brothers and sisters,  
the Law of God teaches us how to offer our lives,  
and Christ shows us how to offer them in love.  
Let us now present our gifts,  
and with them, our desire to live his Word faithfully.

### PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

God of wisdom and love, receive these offerings,  
which come from the work of our hands  
and the longing of our hearts.  
As bread and wine are transformed by your Spirit,  
transform us also, so that your Word may take flesh in our  
lives through obedience, compassion, and mercy.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For you gave your people the Law  
as a path to life and wisdom,  
and in the fullness of time  
you sent your Son not to abolish it,  
but to bring it to perfection through love.  
In him, your commandments become life-giving words,  
calling us to justice, mercy, and faithful living.  
As we journey through this holy season of Lent,  
you renew our hearts,  
teach us to build our lives on what endures,  
and lead us from fear to freedom, from obedience to love.  
  
And so, with Angels and Archangels,  
with Thrones and Dominions,  
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,  
we sing the hymn of your glory,  
as without end we acclaim: **Holy, Holy, Holy...**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Formed by God's Word  
and taught by Christ who fulfilled it in love,  
let us pray with confidence to the Father,  
using the prayer our Savior has given us.

## EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
especially from hearts that resist your Word.  
Grant peace in our days, that, guided by your  
commandments and strengthened by your mercy,  
we may always walk in the freedom of your love  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you did not remove the Law,  
but transformed it into a path of peace and life.  
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will.  
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,  
who fulfills the Law in love  
and takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called  
to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In this sacred meal,  
God's Word has not only been spoken  
but received.  
Christ, the living Law of love,  
now dwells within us.  
May what we have welcomed at this altar  
become the foundation of our daily lives.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God of faithfulness,  
you have nourished us  
with the Bread of life  
and the Word that endures forever.  
Strengthen us to live what we have received,  
so that your commandments, fulfilled in love,  
may be visible in our choices and actions.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## FINAL BLESSING

May the God of wisdom who gave you his Word as a  
guide, bless you. **Amen.**  
May Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law through love, walk  
with you. **Amen.**  
May the Holy Spirit write God's Word upon your hearts  
and give you strength to live it faithfully. **Amen.**  
And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit, come down  
upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace,  
to love and serve the Lord  
by living his Word.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God's commandments are not chains that bind us,  
but foundations that hold us steady.  
When lived in love,  
they become paths to life—  
for us and for the world.

## Thursday of the 3rd Week of Lent - 12 March 2026

Jeremiah 7:23–28; Luke 11:14–23

*Listening to God's voice, decisiveness in faith, the power of God's Kingdom*

### INTRODUCTION

“Nothing makes sense anymore.”

These words often rise from moments of confusion, exhaustion, or quiet despair. They come when we feel unheard, misunderstood, or trapped in situations that seem to have no clear way forward. We may still be going through the motions of life and faith, yet something inside feels locked, silent, or divided. Today's Scriptures speak directly into that experience.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, we hear God's sorrow over a people who no longer listen. God is not absent or powerless; rather, hearts have become closed, voices muted by stubbornness and fear. In the Gospel, Jesus encounters a man who cannot speak, imprisoned by a force beyond his control. When Jesus frees him, speech returns—and yet, instead of rejoicing, some refuse to

recognize God's hand at work. Even in the presence of healing, resistance and division remain.

As we gather for this Eucharist, we are invited to examine our own listening. Where have we stopped hearing God's voice? Where have fear, habit, or indecision silenced our response? Lent calls us not only to reflection, but to choice. Jesus reminds us that neutrality is not an option: to stand with him is to allow his stronger love to enter, to free us, and to claim our lives for God's Kingdom.

Let us bring our confusion, our silence, and our divided hearts before the Lord. In this celebration, may we learn again to listen, to speak with courage, and to choose clearly the life and freedom that God offers us in Christ.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

God calls us to listen to his voice and to walk in his ways, yet we often close our ears and harden our hearts. Let us acknowledge our sins and ask for his mercy.

Jesus Christ, you free people from their demons.  
*Lord, have mercy.*

You give voice to those who cannot speak.

*Christ, have mercy.*

With your coming, the Kingdom of God has begun.

*Lord, have mercy.*

## **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May the merciful God,  
who speaks words of life to his people  
and breaks the power of all that binds us,  
forgive us our sins, open our hearts to his voice,  
and lead us into the freedom of his Kingdom. **Amen.**

## **COLLECT**

Almighty God, help us to follow the call of your grace  
and to prepare with greater devotion  
for the celebration of the Easter mysteries  
as the feast of our salvation draws near.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **HOMILY: Listening, Speaking, and Faith in God's Power**

Once, a small village was plagued by a mysterious silence. One of its young members, normally lively and talkative, suddenly stopped speaking. Doctors examined him and found nothing physically wrong. The boy could hear, his vocal cords worked fine, yet fear and anxiety had locked his voice away. The villagers were saddened; life without his laughter and stories felt emptier. Then, one day, a visitor came—a healer with faith. He listened to the boy, encouraged him, and prayed. Slowly, the child began to speak again, and with each word, the village felt life returning.

This story reminds us of today's readings. In the Gospel, we hear of a man unable to speak, possessed by a "demon." Jesus heals him, and he begins to speak. Modern medicine might call this mutism, a condition rooted in fear or trauma. Yet the deeper truth the Gospel presents is spiritual: freedom to speak, to participate fully in life, is a sign of God's kingdom at work. Just as the boy in the

village needed someone to guide him out of silence, we too must learn to listen and respond to God's voice. The prophet Jeremiah warns that stubbornness and disobedience—ignoring God's voice—harden the heart. Today, we might not hear literal voices, yet God speaks through Scripture, through creation, and through the goodness of others. Ignoring these signs moves us away from Him.

Faith, however, is not passive. It requires decisiveness. Jeremiah calls the people to a clear choice: "Listen to my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Jer 7:23). Jesus echoes this with equal clarity: "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Lk 11:23). Faith often demands a leap—a commitment of all or nothing. Jesus' ministry itself was a confrontation with evil. He tells a short parable: a strong man guards his house, but a stronger man comes, defeats him, and shares the spoils. The strong man represents Satan; the stronger man, Jesus. Here, we see spiritual warfare not as a distant story but as a present reality: God's power is at work, greater than any evil or fear

we face. Saint Paul summarizes it beautifully: "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more."

This teaching is deeply practical. Often, we fail to recognize God at work in the world, in others, or even in ourselves. We misinterpret acts of goodness, attributing them to chance or ulterior motives. Yet Jesus urges us to see with open hearts—to notice the finger of God in every act of healing, courage, or kindness. Our call is to align ourselves with that power, to allow it to shape our decisions, our speech, and our actions. As we approach Easter, let us ask ourselves: Are we listening to God's voice, even when it challenges us? Are we willing to speak the truth and share life-giving words, even when fear tempts us to remain silent? Are we decisive in our faith, recognizing the presence of God's kingdom in the midst of struggle and evil? When we respond with openness, courage, and decisiveness, we become part of the unfolding victory of God's love.

Let us return to the village boy. Freed from fear, he spoke, and the village flourished with his words. Likewise, when

we listen and respond to God, when we allow His Spirit to guide us, life flows more fully—not just for us, but for all around us. May we be attentive, courageous, and decisive, so that God’s kingdom may grow through our words, our actions, and our very lives.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

My brothers and sisters,  
God asks not only for our gifts,  
but for hearts that listen and lives that choose him.  
Let us now offer what we have,  
and ask for the grace to belong wholly to his Kingdom.

### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Lord God, receive these offerings  
as signs of our desire to walk in your ways.  
Free us from all that divides our hearts,  
and let this sacrifice strengthen us  
to stand with Christ, the stronger one who overcomes evil  
and gathers us into the victory of your love.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For you never cease to call your people  
to listen to your voice and to follow your ways.  
When hearts grow stubborn and faith grows weak,  
you do not abandon us, but send your Son  
to break the power of evil  
and reveal the nearness of your Kingdom.  
In him, silence is turned into praise, fear into courage,  
and division into the freedom of belonging to you.  
As we journey through this Lenten season,  
you invite us to choose decisively  
the stronger power of your love.  
And so, with Angels and Archangels,  
with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts of  
heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory,  
as without end we acclaim:  
**Holy, Holy, Holy...**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Called to listen to God's voice and to choose his Kingdom,  
let us pray with trust to the Father,  
using the words our Savior himself has taught us.

## EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
especially from fear, division, and indecision.  
Grant peace in our days, that by the power of your grace  
we may stand firm with Christ, freed from all that binds us,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are the stronger one who overcomes evil  
and gathers what is scattered.  
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will.  
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,  
who drives out all that enslaves us  
and brings the Kingdom of God among us.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Freed and nourished by Christ,  
we are no longer silent spectators of God's work.  
His Kingdom has touched us.  
May we leave this place listening more attentively,  
speaking more courageously, and choosing more faithfully  
to belong to him.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord our God, you have fed us with the Bread of life  
and strengthened us by your presence.  
May this sacrament free us from all that binds us  
and make us attentive to your voice,  
so that we may live as signs of your Kingdom  
in the world.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father,  
who calls you to listen to his voice, bless you. **Amen.**  
May Jesus Christ,  
who frees and restores, walk with you. **Amen.**  
May the Holy Spirit,  
who gives courage and clarity,  
strengthen you to choose God's Kingdom each day. **Amen.**  
And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit,  
come down upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God still speaks.  
Freedom begins when we listen—  
and choose to stand with Christ.

## Friday of the 3rd week of Lent – 13.03.2026

*Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34*

*Rightly Ordered Love — Loving God First, Loving Others Well*

## INTRODUCTION

There is a story of a traveller who set out early one morning, certain he knew the road ahead. Trusting his memory, he ignored the signposts along the way. After hours of walking, the landscape became unfamiliar and the path increasingly difficult. Tired and frustrated, he finally stopped to ask for directions. The old man he met listened carefully and then said, "You have travelled far, but not in the right direction. If you want to reach where you hope to go, you must first turn back." Though it was hard to retrace his steps, the traveller did so—and soon found himself once again on the right road.

This season of Lent reminds us that our spiritual lives can unfold in much the same way. Without realising it, we can allow busyness, worries, or even good intentions to pull us away from what truly gives direction and meaning to our

lives. Today's readings gently call us to stop, reflect, and return. Through the prophet Hosea, God invites His people to come back to Him, promising healing and new life. In the Gospel, Jesus cuts through all complexity and shows us the heart of God's will: to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to let that love shape the way we live with others.

As we begin this Eucharistic celebration, let us open our hearts to God's mercy and allow Him to realign our priorities, so that our journey may once again be guided by love—love of God above all things, and love of neighbour flowing from it.

### **PENITENTIAL ACT**

As we journey through Lent, let us acknowledge before God that we often misplace our priorities and fail to love as we should.

Lord Jesus Christ, you call us to love God with our whole heart. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ Jesus, you teach us to love our neighbour as ourselves. *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord Jesus Christ, you heal our divided hearts and lead us back to the Father. *Lord, have mercy.*

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May the God of mercy,  
who calls us back from all that distracts and divides us,  
forgive us our sins,  
restore our hearts to what truly matters,  
and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

### **COLLECT**

Merciful God, you ask us to return to you with all our heart and to express our love for you in love for one another.

Purify our intentions,  
order our desires according to your will,  
and help us to walk faithfully in the way of your commandments.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## HOMILY: Priorities of Love

There is a story about a man who spent years meticulously collecting rare books. His house was filled with shelves from floor to ceiling, each crammed with volumes he prized. He knew where each book came from, how much it was worth, and how rare it was. One day, a friend visited and asked him, almost casually, “With all these books, do you ever have time to actually read?” The man paused. The question caught him off guard. In that moment, he realized that in his pursuit of collecting, cataloguing, and protecting his books, he had slowly lost the joy of reading itself. What was meant to nourish his mind and imagination had become an end in itself. Sometimes in life, we can be so focused on the many things we think are important that we lose sight of what really matters.

In today’s Gospel, a scribe—an expert in Jewish law—comes to Jesus with a similar concern. The law of Moses contained more than six hundred commandments, governing every aspect of daily life. The scribe’s question, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” is not just

academic. It is a heartfelt search for clarity. Amid all the rules, expectations, and religious duties, what truly lies at the centre?

Jesus’ answer is beautifully simple and deeply challenging. He begins with the foundational confession of Israel’s faith: “The Lord your God is the one Lord.” Everything starts there. Faith is not first about rules, but about relationship. And from that relationship flows the greatest commandment: to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. In other words, with the whole of who we are—our thoughts, our emotions, our choices, our energy, and our desires.

But Jesus does not stop there. He immediately adds a second commandment: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” This is not an optional extra or a secondary concern. It stands alongside the first. These two commandments are inseparable. We cannot claim to love God while ignoring the needs, dignity, and suffering of others. At the same time, Jesus makes it clear that love of neighbour flows from love of God. When God is at the

centre, our love is purified, widened, and strengthened. Without that foundation, even good deeds can become self-serving or exhausting.

This teaching speaks directly into our daily lives. It is easy to lose perspective. We juggle responsibilities, chase success, try to be productive, and even immerse ourselves in church activities and good works. None of these are bad. But we can slowly drift into doing many things *for* God without spending time *with* God. Jesus gently calls us back to the right order: first, love God; then, let that love shape everything else. When our relationship with God is alive, our actions toward others become more patient, more compassionate, and more generous.

Love, as Jesus teaches it, is never abstract. It is lived out in ordinary moments: in listening without judgment, in forgiving when it is hard, in showing kindness when no one is watching, in standing with those who are overlooked or forgotten. When we are rooted in God's love, we become channels through which that love reaches the world.

We end with another story. A young woman planted a small tree in her backyard. Year after year, she watered it, protected it from harsh weather, and patiently watched it grow. One day, a neighbour asked why she invested so much care in a tree that might never bear fruit in her lifetime. She smiled and replied, "I care for it because it gives life and shade—not just to me, but to all who come near it." In much the same way, when we love God with our whole being, that love cannot remain contained. It overflows quietly but powerfully into the lives of those around us, offering shade, hope, healing, and light.

May we learn to prioritize love rightly: first, love of God with all that we are, and then, love of our neighbour as ourselves. In doing so, we discover what truly matters and find ourselves living close to the heart of God's kingdom.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may help us place before God not only bread and wine,  
but hearts ready to love Him above all things  
and to serve one another generously.

## **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Lord God, receive these gifts we bring before you,  
and shape our lives according to the love you desire.  
May this offering draw us closer to you  
and make us signs of your compassion in the world.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For you call your people back to yourself  
when they stray from your ways,  
and you teach us that love of you  
is the source and summit of all true love.  
In your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you show us the perfect harmony  
between devotion to you  
and compassion for our neighbour.  
As we journey through this holy season of Lent,  
you purify our hearts,

reorder our priorities,  
and lead us to what truly gives life.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,  
with Thrones and Dominions,  
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,  
we sing the hymn of your glory,  
as without end we acclaim:  
Holy, Holy, Holy...

## **INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER**

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching,  
let us pray with hearts renewed by love for the Father who  
guides us home:

## **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
especially from all that distracts us  
from loving you above all things.  
Grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be free from sin and secure in hope  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you taught us that true love brings harmony and peace.  
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will, who live and reign for ever  
and ever. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

## **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

Having received the Body and Blood of Christ,  
we pause in silence.  
The One who commands us to love God and neighbour  
now lives within us.  
May his presence quietly reorder our hearts,  
so that our love becomes concrete, generous,  
and faithful in daily life.

## **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Lord God, you have nourished us with the Bread of life.  
May this sacrament strengthen our love for you  
and inspire us to serve others with sincerity and joy.  
Keep us faithful to what truly matters,  
as we walk toward your kingdom.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **FINAL BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you  
and teach your heart what truly matters. Amen.  
May he help you love him with all your being  
and recognise his presence in those you meet. Amen.  
And may Almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, loving God above all things  
and serving your neighbour with joy.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

When love for God comes first,  
everything else finds its rightful place.  
Let your love for Him shape the way  
you see, speak to, and care for others this week.

## Saturday of the 3rd Week of Lent – 14.03.2026

*Hosea 5:15–6:6; Luke 18:9–14*

### INTRODUCTION

There is an old story about a small country church that kept its doors open from morning until evening. People would come and go quietly throughout the day. One afternoon, a man dressed neatly and confidently walked in. He knelt briefly, said a few well-chosen prayers, glanced around, and left, satisfied that he had done his duty. Later that same day, another man entered unnoticed. He remained near the back, his head bowed, hands clenched, struggling even to find the right words. He stayed for a long time, whispering a prayer through tears. A sacristan who happened to be watching later said, “One man visited the church; the other met God.”

That simple observation leads us to an important question: how do we stand before God when we come to pray? Do we come presenting our achievements, our goodness, and our efforts—or do we come carrying our need, our weakness, and our hope for mercy? Lent invites us into

this honest self-examination. It calls us away from appearances and religious performance, and leads us back to truth of heart.

Today's readings speak directly to this question. Through the prophet Hosea, God reminds us that what he desires most is love, faithfulness, and a genuine relationship—not empty sacrifice. In the Gospel, Jesus shows us two very different ways of praying: one shaped by pride and comparison, the other by humility and trust. As we begin this Eucharistic celebration, let us place ourselves before the Lord just as we are, confident that his mercy is greater than our weakness and that his desire is always to heal and restore.

### **PENITENTIAL ACT**

Brothers and sisters, the Lord does not ask us to justify ourselves, but to return to him with humble and repentant hearts. Aware of our sins and trusting in God's compassion, let us acknowledge our need for mercy, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to seek out the lost and to call sinners to repentance. *Lord, have mercy.*

You welcome the humble and lift up those who place their trust in you. *Christ, have mercy.*

You heal our wounds and lead us back to the Father's embrace. *Lord, have mercy.*

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May almighty God, rich in mercy and slow to anger, look with compassion upon our weakness. May he forgive us our sins, heal what is wounded within us, restore us to peace, and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

### **COLLECT**

Merciful God, as we journey through these holy days of penance, you call us back to yourself again and again. Teach us to approach you with humble and sincere hearts, to trust not in our own righteousness but in your mercy, and to live already from the mystery of Easter. Renew us by your grace, so that our lives may reflect your love and faithfulness. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,

your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **HOMILY: The Prayer of the Humble Heart**

I once heard a story about two men who went to the same temple every day. One was proud of his life, his accomplishments, and his strict observance of the law. The other, a man weighed down by mistakes and failures, felt unworthy even to lift his eyes. One day, the temple doors opened, and both men entered, each with a prayer on his lips. The proud man recited his achievements, listing all the ways he believed he was better than others. The humble man simply whispered, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” That day, it was the humble man who left the temple reconciled, at peace, and embraced by God’s mercy. This story is reflected in today’s readings. The prophet Hosea reminds us, “What I want is love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not holocausts” (Hos 6:6). God does not ask us to parade our successes or tally our virtues before Him. What He asks is a heart that is open, honest, and aware of its own need for mercy. Like the tax collector

in the Gospel, we come with empty hands—or perhaps with hands full of mistakes—and we are met by God’s unwavering love.

The Pharisee in Jesus’ parable represents a reality we all face. He prayed, listing his virtues and measuring himself against others. In doing so, he revealed a heart closed to God and to his neighbour. Pride and comparison can subtly creep into our lives. We may not boast openly, but silently ranking ourselves above others, feeling morally superior, or taking comfort in another’s failings distances us from God. The tax collector, on the other hand, admitted his failings, acknowledged his sin, and asked simply for mercy. In this humble act, he showed us the pathway to authentic prayer and genuine reconciliation with God. Hosea’s words echo this truth: when we return to God, He will heal our wounds and give us life. “After two days he will give us life, on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his presence” (Hos 6:2). God’s mercy is not earned—it is given. Our task is simply to seek Him, to turn back to Him, to recognize our poverty of spirit, and to

entrust ourselves to His love. When we do, we open ourselves to transformation, humility, gratitude, and the profound peace that comes from being known and loved fully.

Prayer, whether of thanksgiving or petition, must come from the heart. A prayer filled with pride, even if correct in form, can separate us from God. A prayer of genuine humility, even if brief and simple, draws us close. The tax collector's prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," reminds us that we do not approach God as judges, but as children in need of a Father's love.

Let me close with another story. A young woman once came to Confession, trembling with shame over her repeated mistakes. She thought she had little to offer God, yet she prayed with the simple words, "Lord, be merciful to me." Afterward, she left with a smile, her heart lighter, feeling the presence of God's forgiveness. She understood what the tax collector knew all along: mercy does not require perfection. It requires honesty, humility, and trust. God delights in our return, no matter how far we have

strayed, and He raises us up with a love that always exceeds what we can imagine or deserve.

Let us, then, approach God with the prayer of the tax collector in our hearts. Let us recognize our own need, refrain from judging others, and open ourselves to His mercy, which restores, heals, and gives life. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Mindful of the Gospel we have heard, and aware of our own need for mercy, let us now bring before the Lord the gifts of bread and wine. Like the tax collector, we come not trusting in ourselves, but placing our hope in God's generous and healing love.

### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Merciful Lord, receive these offerings which we place upon your altar. As this bread and wine are set apart for your service, so purify our hearts of pride and self-reliance. Shape us into a people who worship you in humility and truth, and let this sacrifice draw us ever deeper into your mercy. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you do not delight in outward sacrifice without love, nor in words spoken without sincerity of heart. In your mercy, you turn toward those who seek you, you lift up the humble, and you welcome back the sinner who returns in trust. You heal the wounds of your people and restore them to life, not by their own merit, but by your faithful love.

In this season of Lent, you call us away from pride and self-justification and invite us into a deeper relationship with you. You teach us that true worship is found in humility, true prayer in honesty, and true holiness in trust. Therefore, with grateful hearts, and with angels and saints who rejoice in your mercy, we proclaim your glory and sing:  
**Holy, Holy, Holy...**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered as children who trust in their Father's love, and aware of our daily need for forgiveness and grace, let us pray with confidence the prayer our Savior has taught us:

### EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil. Free our hearts from pride, comparison, and self-reliance, and grant us the humility that opens us to your mercy. Give us peace in our days, and help us to wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith and humility of your people who long to return to you. Grant us the peace that flows from forgiveness, the peace that heals broken hearts and restores communion, for you live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who come before him not claiming their own worthiness, but trusting fully in his mercy and love.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In the quiet of this moment, let us allow the Lord we have received to speak to our hearts. Like the tax collector, we need only one simple prayer: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” May this Eucharist reassure us that we are known, forgiven, and loved, and may we leave this place renewed in humility, gratitude, and peace.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Merciful God, you have nourished us with the Body and Blood of your Son, a gift of healing and reconciliation. Through this sacrament, strengthen us to walk humbly before you, to trust always in your mercy, and to reflect your compassion in our words and actions. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## FINAL BLESSING

May God, who never rejects a humble heart, bless you with the grace of repentance and renewal. May Christ lift you up when you fall and teach you the way of mercy. And may the Holy Spirit guide you in prayer, humility, and love. And may almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of humility, mercy, and sincere prayer.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God does not ask us to impress him. He asks us to trust him. Each day, stand before the Lord with a humble heart, confident that mercy is always greater than our weakness.