

Third Sunday of Lent

Dear Friends,

As a continuous reflection of the covenant relationship, I would like to invite you to think about the commandments that God has given to the people of Israel. These are the abiding guidelines for them to keep the covenant. The law, temple and God's oneness constitute the fundamental institutions of God's chosen people. The oneness becomes visible for those who follow God. The commandments keep us intact with God. In our country they used to say, "Good or bad doesn't stop with you alone. It continues through the family and children" as related to the first reading.

There was an article in the New York Times on June 7, 2003 which says, "The Ten Commandments can be seen as a covenant with God and as rules for life. It clarifies what Sinai further meant was the initiation of a people into a whole way of life, elaborated in the written and oral teachings of Torah. And underlying that way of life was not just a set of rules but a relationship -- a covenant joining these tribes with God, with one another and with a cosmic drama and a historical narrative."

The second reading relates very well that Crucified Christ is the greatest symbol for those who believe in God. As St. Paul quotes, "Jews always look for signs," because they had a lot of signs in the Jewish culture. We could see in the old testament and in the new testament. They looked at each miracle as a messianic sign. The Jews expected the messiah to do signs and wonders, which is why Jesus did many signs and wonders. Greece is the birthplace of philosophy. That's why Greeks seek wisdom. Paul brought Cross as a sign of oneness through Jesus. It was looked on as foolish, but that was the highest ideal for those who believe.

In the gospel, Jesus brings God's oneness by cleansing the temple. The temple was the pinnacle of Jewish culture. Everything happened around the temple, which we see even today when you go to big shrines and famous worship spaces. There was discrimination and overburden for the people as they had to follow strict laws of the temple. This one event is mentioned in all the Gospel because of the oneness that Jesus brings through his death on the cross. As we read in the Philippians 2:5-11, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: died like a slave on the cross."

Oneness includes purifying our hearts. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. When we receive Jesus in the eucharist, he purifies our heart and soul, makes us one with him. That is the covenant relationship. This week, I challenge you to look at the crucifix either at your home or in church and pray about how you can be one with him in your covenantal relationship.

This may also be a great week to prepare for a Lenten reconciliation by reviewing the ten commandments and see where we need assistance from God in following his law and covenant relationship.

