

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 3RD, 2024

"THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT TO GIVE UP"

As we continue our journey through Lent each of us is called to discernment regarding our motivations.

Why do we do the things we do?

For instance, is our obedience to the Commandments based on fear of punishment or on our love for God?

One of the themes of this Year B cycle of Lenten readings is the various covenants between God and humanity.

Week one recounted the covenant with Noah and all of creation. Week two described the covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

This week we have the covenant of the Law given through Moses.

The Torah of the Old Testament was considered a sacred reflection of the wisdom of God, "more precious than a heap of purest gold."

The covenants of old were a preparation for the new and eternal covenant established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul tells us that Jesus crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Jesus reveals the totality of God's plan for our salvation.

Through him we are reconciled to the Father.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks in metaphor about destroying the Temple and raising it up in three days.

The Temple represented the presence of God in the midst of his people.

According to Jewish mysticism, the Temple was believed to have been built on the "navel of the world" and was considered the center of the cosmos.

When Jesus says, "Destroy this Temple and I will rebuild it," he is referring to his death and resurrection which establish him as the Christ, the center of the universe, the Alpha and the Omega, the point of contact with God.

And his "temple" on earth will be his Body the Church, his dwelling place in the Spirit.

Jesus has given the Eucharist to the Church to make present his one eternal sacrifice to the Father establishing the New Covenant in his Blood.

Whenever we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we are "re-sealing" this New Covenant.

You and I are recommitting ourselves to living in a relationship of love with God through, with, and in Christ.

With the love of Jesus as the center of our lives, it will overflow in love and service toward our neighbor, especially the "least of these."

Today is a good opportunity to reflect on how our Lenten journey is going.

If you're like me, it's been a mixed "success."

I've been doing pretty good with prayer, but not as good with fasting.

The important thing is not to give up.

A monk was asked what he did all day. He responded, "I fall, and I get up ... I fall, and I get up."

Lent isn't about our successes.

It's more about getting in touch with our need for God and recognizing the Father's great mercy.

Jesus' death on the cross can be seen by people with no faith as a failure.

As St. Paul explains, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."

Jesus took all our sins and failures with him on the Cross.
He appeared to have been defeated, but in reality, he was victorious.
And the victory he won he shares with you and me.
So don't give up. Stay faithful in the struggle. Jesus walks with you as you strive to walk with him.