

Sitting in Silence with the Lord

Fr. Tom Pringle

Hey there again, everyone. Father Tom Pringle here. It's an honor to be back with you for this session on the readings for the third Sunday of Lent. Just as with my previous talk, I would like to encourage you to pause the video here so that you can go read the readings for today. I think it would be beneficial for you to see where the Lord is leading all of us for reflection through the readings.

Opening Prayer

Let's begin with a prayer, shall we? *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Loving Father we give you thanks and praise for the opportunities you have given us over the past couple of weeks to dive more deeply into our relationship with you. We invite you into our hearts a new this day. And Lord as we continue throughout this Lenten journey, we ask that you fill our hearts with a spirit of detachment from those things that are not pointing us to you. Mother Mary, we ask that you continue to pray for us throughout this Lenten season that we may continue to be brought to a more intimate encounter with the heart of your son. And we ask this as we ask all things in Jesus's name, Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Exodus 20: 1-17

I'd like to begin our session today by reading a portion of our first reading from the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus. And there are two options for the readings for today, it's mostly chapter 20:1-17 but for the shorter option it kind of just goes through the commandments.

And this is what Scripture says. ***"In those days God delivered all these commandments. I, the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain for the Lord will not leave unpunished the one who takes His name in vain. Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath day. Honor your father and mother that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."*** My brothers and sisters, this is the word of the Lord.

A Confession

So, I have a bit of a confession to make. My friends know this about me and now you will too. But I'm kind of addicted to my phone. I know it's true, but this Lent I've really been working on detaching from this constant connectivity. So far, it's been a challenge, but I continue to work on

it each and every day. Balance, putting God first, setting aside distractions, doing the work of the day but not getting consumed by it. I'll admit it hasn't been easy, but it is what all of them us should be striving for as we seek holiness and resolve to more fully live for God each and every day.

How about you? How is your Lent going? Your sacrifices, your prayer? A question that I need to ask myself regularly and I encourage you to contemplate as well. When was the last time that I sat in complete silence? No devices, no music, no background noise or conversations, just the silence of your heart seeking the voice of the Lord.

Examining with Fresh Eyes

Today's first reading that I've just shared, we hear again, the 10 commandments. We've heard them all before, probably multiple times. And for that reason, it can be really easy for us to kind of just gloss over them to go on autopilot. Oh yes, the 10 commandments. I've heard them all before. That's what we think. However, today let's take some intentional time to pause and look at these 10 commandments with fresh eyes and a quiet heart. Each of the commandments root us in our belief in God and how we are called to live out those beliefs as faithful disciples of Jesus. The commandments are a great tool for examining our conscience for confession. In addition, to examining where we have fallen short regarding any of these commands, let's also take the time to consider examining our intentions, especially if we continue to struggle with the same sins.

It's worth our time and efforts to dig a little deeper to get to the root, to ask the question, *why do I continually commit this sin? Why do I continually fall in this particular area?* Invite God into this question. And in the quiet, listen for His response. This type of reflection is an important aspect of our preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation. Something I encourage you to do during this Lenten season. Anytime that you are going to receive the sacrament, and again, I encourage you to do this with frequency, there is a great value in first reflecting and really preparing your heart so that you can be fully receptive to encountering God's mercy and forgiveness. Mercy and forgiveness that are freely poured out through the sacrament.

A Forgiveness Standard

As we receive the abundance of God's forgiveness, we are now called to bring that same forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. Because the standard with which we forgive will be the standard which God uses to forgive us. There's a line in our Father, a prayer we pray at every mass that should kind of scare us. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Are we living that out in our lives? Are we forgiving others as God has forgiven us? Are we truly receptive to God's mercy? And do we then allow God to use us as instruments to bring His mercy into the lives of others?

You may immediately be able to recall a person or a group of people that you have unforgiveness towards. Now is the time to surrender that, forgive them today, pray for them and pray for healing in that situation or relationship. But if you aren't able to offer that forgiveness yet and there are some who may not be able to, I simply encourage you to ask the Lord for the grace to begin the process of forgiving, why? Because the world needs us to be the instruments that bring His love and mercy to others.

A Tangible Example

If we want a tangible example of what this forgiveness looks like, we have someone who gave witness to what it means to truly be an instrument of God's mercy. Pope Saint John Paul II is someone who brought the gospel to life in everything that he did. But one instance stands out in my mind. On May 13th, 1981, John Paul was preparing for one of his weekly audiences in Saint Peter's Square. As he drove around, waving to the pilgrims who had come to Rome, multiple gunshots ring out. The Pope was shot in the stomach and in the finger. Thankfully, he survived that assassination attempt and made a complete recovery.

But months after being shot, John Paul II did something quite remarkable. He went to the prison where the gunmen who had shot him was being held. He met with a man, prayed with him and forgave him. Think of how much hope and peace we could bring to our world if each of us lived and acted from a place of radical forgiveness each day. As we continue to contemplate, today our need for forgiveness and to forgive.

John 2:13-17

I'd like to turn our attention now to the gospel reading. This is from John 2, and I'll specifically be reading verses 13 to 17. This is what scripture says. ***"Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves as well as the moneychangers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area with the sheep and oxen and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And to those who sold doves He said, 'take these out of here and stop making my Father's house a marketplace.' His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, zeal for your house will consume me."***

A Similar Zeal and Fervor for God

Jesus boldly casts out those who are dishonoring His Father's house. Now, while I wouldn't recommend flipping tables and driving people out of church as an evangelization tactic, I can encourage all of us to be consumed with the same zeal and fervor for God that Jesus had demonstrated there. In our world today, words can be used so carelessly. We don't even think about what we're saying half the time. And then as it's coming out of our mouths, we're left almost stunned and save ourselves, did I really just say that? Or on social media, you may just say something without thinking about what those words might mean for someone who interacts with us. Because of that, we need to be more careful in the words that we choose.

As Catholic Christians, do people know that we are followers of Christ by the language that we use? Do our words bring people to a deeper encounter with the Lord and express a zeal for God, or do they lead people away?

Be an Example

Because here's the thing. The best way we can evangelize and show others the goodness and glory of God is by being deeply faithful in the example of how we live. It's a quote that's attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, but I think it's from someone else that says, *"preach the gospel at all times, when necessary use words."* The best way to evangelize, the best way to show others the goodness of God is by simply living our lives faithfully. ***"Zeal for your house will consume me."*** Do we have true zeal for God? Do we have true zeal for God's people in the church?

The Holy Spirit desires to do powerful things in and through us, but we cannot fully avail ourselves to this if our hearts, our discernment, our actions are clouded by selfishness or sin. We have to continually strive to keep our hearts clear of sins such as vanity, pride, fear, anger, and judgment, so that we can be certain that we have purity of intention. This once again requires that we take time regularly to silence the noise and ask, what does God desire to do through us?

I pray that this Lenten journey may continue to be a fruitful time for all of us, that we continue to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, to become aware of those areas of our hearts that need healing and wholeness. May we continue to pray for the spirit of attachment of those things that are preventing our relationship with God to grow. And may zeal for God's house always consume us.

Closing Prayer

As we conclude, I would like to pray a prayer of detachment that was written by Saint Peter Faber. It's a beautiful prayer that I encourage each of you to pray with at some point throughout this week. Let's pray together.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. I beg of you Lord to remove anything which separates me from you and you from me. Remove anything that makes me unworthy of your sight, your control, your reprehension, of your speech and conversation, of your benevolence and love. Cast from me every evil that stands in the way of my seeing you, hearing, tasting, savoring and touching you. Fearing and being mindful of you, knowing, trusting, loving and possessing you, being conscious of your presence. And as far as maybe enjoying you. This is what I ask for myself, and to earnestly desire from you, Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.