



*From the Pastor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent - B  
March 4, 2018*

In Part 3 of my *Lenten* series on the required *Sunday Prayer over the People [POTP]*, we look at the *3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent's* blessing. Unlike the Gospel on the *1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*, which is always the *Temptation of Christ*, and the *2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent*, which is always His *Transfiguration*, the Gospel on the *3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent* have various themes. The *3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent's* Gospels are: *The Samaritan Woman at the Well [Cycle A]* - *The Cleansing of the Temple [Cycle B]* - and *The Fruitless Fig Tree [Cycle C]*. The *Lenten Sunday's POTP*, which echoes that day's readings, leads up to *Good Friday's* unique *POTP*, which we will explore on *Easter Sunday*. As a *Lenten discipline*, pray each week's blessing *each day* of that particular week.

*Prayer over the People - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent*

*Direct, O Lord, we pray,  
the hearts of your faithful,  
and in your kindness grant your servants  
this grace: that, abiding in the love of you  
and their neighbor, they may fulfill  
the whole of your commands.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

***LOVE GOD & YOUR NEIGHBOR.*** The Ten Commandments, proclaimed in today's readings, which encapsulate hundreds of divine decrees and ordinances, were summarized by Jesus who said: *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."* [Matthew 22:37-40] The Gospels on the *3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent* also highlight our need to welcome God and others, just as the Samaritan Woman and Jesus welcomed each other, and as Jesus made the Temple more 'welcoming' and as fig trees should produce what God calls them to provide for others. In *Lent* we are called to pray, fast and give alms or welcome and provide for all in need. Do you use Operation Rice Bowl, a Mite Box, the Bishop's Annual Appeal, and other means to show your love of God and neighbor?

***GOD CAN DIRECT OUR HEARTS.*** While we cannot give to every just cause that comes our way, being *asked* to support others - as those heart-wrenching advertisements for children with cancer and other causes so often do - is *good exercise* for our hearts. The Bible often charges God's People - that's US - with having hardened hearts, stiff necks, closed eyes and minds, and stingy [and sometimes sticky!] fingers. So God never ceases, through various means, to *direct* us to ease up, mellow out, open up, and give to those in need. Remember: every opportunity *TO* support those in need is also a chance for us to thank God for NOT being one of those in need *OF* support!

***FULFILLING GOD'S COMMANDS.*** Many hate to hear the unpleasant truth that *we* do *not* run the show or call the shots. Morality is not something we vote on or decide; it is *revealed* to us by God - for our own good! [How often do we recommit the Original Sin by doing as Adam and Eve did: disregard *God's* ways for *our own* ways?] That is why we must 'check in' with God *FIRST*, before deciding or doing anything. For if we *truly love* God we must *include* God in our thoughts and actions, our plans and dreams.

This is even more challenging because God gifted us with free will, with the ability to choose what to follow and what to ignore. But one phrase in today's *POTP* gives us the key to learn how to choose wisely, and that is: *"abiding in the love of you."* When those in love *abide in* each other, they gradually become more and more like each other. [Hopefully, they also grow to *LIKE* each other more and more!] Not that God calls us to lose our individuality, or to acquiesce our free will without careful thought. We are not robots; nor are we slaves. But we are called to be lovers - lovers of one another, and lovers of God. And unless we let others, with their hopes and dreams, their concerns and worries, into our hearts and minds - we do not truly love them. What *Lenten disciplines* will you practice so you can open yourself up more to God and to others? Will you let God's love take your sins and failings away this *Lent* by going to *Confession*?

*With God's love and my prayers,*

*Father Mike*

***Very Rev. Michael J. Kreder, KHS***