

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Pure Hearts

Good and loving God,
you have written your law within
our hearts.
In these final Lenten days,
examine our hearts and purge them of
all that keeps us from you.
Grant us, who were baptized into
Christ Jesus,
the strength of the Holy Spirit to release
our selfish desires
and through this dying to self, rise to
new life.
Grow within our hearts a deep desire to
live in union with you
and aid our journey as we follow
your will.
Give us pure hearts that remain
obedient to your promises
so that, filled with the grace of
your covenant,
we may imitate your Son
and proclaim your goodness throughout
the earth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 18, 2018

Covenant



Today's Readings: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 14–15; Hebrews 5:7–9; John 12:20–33. During the past few weeks, the theme of the Scriptures focused on God's covenant. In the reading from Jeremiah, God's covenant takes center stage once again. Jeremiah tells the people that God will make a new covenant with them and it will not be the covenant of their fathers. We learn that this covenant will be written on hearts and that all will know the Lord. It is clear that God deeply loves his people. No matter how many times before they have disobeyed the Law and turned away from God's love, God continues to reach out to them in love.

This new covenant is revealed in Christ, and in Baptism, the new law, the law of love, was written in our

hearts. Yet, we still submit to sin and often turn away from God. Psalm 51 is a helpful prayer when our hearts have gone astray. The deep emotion of the petitioner can be sensed as this text is sung. When have you needed to seek God's mercy? We know that God will not abandon us; God wishes to share abundantly his mercy. The law that God has placed within us demands that we die to self and learn to follow the Lord. As the Second Reading states, Jesus learned obedience from his suffering on the Cross. His death brought about a new creation. The suffering we undergo as part of dying to self will strengthen us and lead us to produce much fruit. For prayer this week, meditate upon your favorite hymn about God's love or mercy.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 19

Solemnity of St. Joseph

Only a few passages in Scripture provide a glimpse into the person of St. Joseph. His care for Jesus and the Blessed Virgin speaks volumes about his character and devotion to God. As you reflect on the Gospel today, pay attention to the words or images that stir within you. What do they invite you to understand about Joseph? Consider taking part in a St. Joseph table in your community. *Today's Readings:* 2 Samuel 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27 and 29; Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Luke 2:41–51a.

Tuesday, March 20

Son of Man

The desert of the Lenten season might find us complaining as did the children of Israel. Our parched hearts yearn for drink. In the desolation of the desert our hearts and minds can be free to seek God. The First Reading foreshadows the life-giving event of Christ's death and Resurrection. Just as the serpent was raised and healed the Israelites, so too was the Son of Man raised so that whoever believes in him will be saved. What have you learned in the desert this season? Plant some seedlings, nurture them in the coming days, and watch your desert bloom. *Today's Readings:* Numbers 21:4–9; Psalm 102:2–3, 16–18, 19–21; John 8:21–30.

Wednesday, March 21

Fiery Furnace

The three men in the First Reading refuse to worship the idol. They had faith that God would protect them from death in the furnace. Even the king is transformed when he learns of the angel of the Lord walking among them and protecting them. The Psalm response, "Glory and praise for ever," is a portion of the song of praise the men sing. Pray the Psalm at mealtime and name something for which you would like to praise God. *Today's Readings:* Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95; Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31–42.

Thursday, March 22

I AM

Today's Gospel presents another encounter between Jesus and the Jews. The passage helps to affirm the divinity of Jesus once again, even though his audience struggles to understand. For the third time in John's Gospel Jesus says, "I AM." By saying this, Jesus equates himself with God. This was radical and not well-received. Jesus truly reveals God to us. Place yourself in the story. What do you hear? What do you see? *Today's Readings:* Genesis 17:3–9; Psalm 105:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; John 8:51–59.

Friday, March 23

Son of God

Jesus' adversaries question whether he is truly the Messiah. Jesus skillfully explains that he is the Son of God. He wonders why the works he performed are not proof enough that he reveals the one true God. The Jews in John's Gospel account think this is blasphemous and try to arrest him once again. The end of the Gospel reminds us that Jesus' ministry reveals God's power and so many come to know God. At the Stations of the Cross this evening, meditate on how Jesus did the work of the Father as he carried the cross. *Today's Readings:* Jeremiah 20:10–13; Psalm 18:2–3a, 3bc–4, 5–6, 7; John 10:31–42.

Saturday, March 24

One Nation

Ezekiel paints a great picture of what life will be when all heed God's voice. In Christ, God will gather all peoples unto himself. God will heal them and restore them to life. They will flourish and God will dwell among them. This is a hopeful image. No matter how far away we are, God promises to bring us home and make us holy. As the week ends, think about how you will observe Holy Week. *Today's Readings:* Ezekiel 37:21–28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11–12abcd, 13; John 11:45–56.

