**Scripture and Feast Day Notes**

**Sunday, March 10, 2019**

**From Today’s Readings**

**Matthew 5: 17-48** Having just proclaimed the Beatitudes -- an astounding reversal of human values that redefine holiness and blessing -- Jesus teaches the deepest meaning of the Law. He does this by juxtaposing what listeners “have heard said” with His own more radical and demanding teaching. Thus, the legalistic understanding of anger, murder, adultery, divorce, oath-taking, and vengeance is transformed. *Discuss/reflect: Jesus asks us to love even those who persecute us and to pray for them. “If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?” (v.46) What do you think this might accomplish? How could this figure in* your *life?*

**Romans 12:1-13:10** These verses survey all the ways our transformation by God’s Spirit can impact concretely on how we live; everything we are and everything we do becomes an “act of worship.” (v.1) Even as law-abiding citizens of this world, we aspire to a higher calling and authority: Love is the fulfillment of the Law. (13:10*) Discuss/reflect: In verses 12:9-21, which two commands are the easiest for you to keep? Which two the hardest?* ***For teachers of primary/elementary Sunday School grades:*** *Read 12: 9-21 from a children’s Bible. Make mini-posters by choosing a simple phrase from this reading for children to illustrate. (Be happy! Share with others! Pray!)*

**Isaiah 33: 2-22** In the shadow of the enemy Assyria, Isaiah with all of Israel pleads for God’s power and presence, trusting that He will appear in His majesty as a consuming fire within which only the righteous will be able to dwell. (v. 14) *Discuss/reflect: In your experience of God right now, is His presence more like a consuming fire or a fading candle? Why?*

**Today is the Sunday of the Expulsion**

Expulsion Sunday reminds us of that original exile from God’s presence: Adam and Eve driven our of Paradise for eating from the tree that had been forbidden to them. The day’s hymn recounts how the fruit tasted of sin and death.

The notion that they were wiser than God in deciding to eat the fruit of the “knowledge of good and evil” is at the heart of every sinful thought or action to this day. And even now, when we do something we’re not proud of, facing God is indeed as difficult as it was for Adam and Eve who tried to hide from Him as He walked “in the Garden in the cool of the day.” (Genesis 3:8) Thankfully, in God’s loving mercy, this is an exile He will not let us endure forever.

Great Lent is a unique opportunity to ponder God’s absence even as we seek Him in 40 days of prayer and reflection. *Read Genesis 3. When do you feel most “naked” before God? How does this help you understand Adam and Eve’s reactions? Department of Christian Education*

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