

Reading for Weekday in the Second Week of Lent

March 3rd 2026

First reading

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

‘Learn to do good; seek justice.’

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 50(49):8-9. 16b-17. 21, 23. R23b

To one whose way is blameless,

I will show the salvation of God.

I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices;
your offerings are always before me.

I do not take more bullocks from your farms,
nor goats from among your herds.

How can you recite my commandments,
and take my covenant on your lips,
you who despise correction,
and cast my words behind you?

You do this, and should I keep silence?

Do you think that I am like you?

I accuse you, lay the charge before you.

A sacrifice of praise gives me honour,
and to one whose way is blameless,

I will show the salvation of God.

Gospel Acclamation

Ezekiel 18:31

Glory to you, O Christ, Wisdom of God the Father.

Cast away from you all your transgressions, says the Lord,
and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

Glory to you, O Christ, Wisdom of God the Father.

Gospel

Matthew 23:1-12

'They preach, but do not practise.'

At that time: Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practise. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market-places and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.'

Short reflection on the reading for today

Jesus criticises the Pharisees for laying heavy burdens on people's shoulders. In contrast, his own invitation was, "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest." His work consisted in easing off unnecessary loads from people's shoulders rather than laying extra burdens on them. Most of us have to deal with burdens of one kind or another as we go through life. Some burdens are necessary and unavoidable; they are the burdens of love, the burdens that come to us from giving ourselves to others in one way or another. Jesus is critical of those who impose unnecessary burdens on others. We can all be guilty of doing that from time to time.

The Lord teaches that, rather than imposing unnecessary burdens on others, we ought to help carry each other's burdens, to make life less burdensome for them. In doing that we will be acting in the spirit of the one who said, "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest." The Lord helps us all to carry our burdens, both the necessary and inevitable ones and the unnecessary ones. As St Paul knew from personal experience, he is strength in our weakness, and in times of weakness we can turn to him for strength.