

Reading for Weekday in the First Week of Lent

23rd February 2026

First reading

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

'In righteousness shall you judge your neighbour.'

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

'You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

'You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour: I am the Lord.

'You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 19(18):8. 9. 10. 15. R John 6:63c

Your words, O Lord, are spirit and life.

The law of the Lord is perfect;
it revives the soul.

The decrees of the Lord are steadfast;
they give wisdom to the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right;
they gladden the heart.

The command of the Lord is clear;
it gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure,
abiding for ever.

The judgements of the Lord are true;
they are, all of them, just.

May the spoken words of my mouth,
the thoughts of my heart,
win favour in your sight, O Lord,
my rock and my redeemer!

Gospel Acclamation

2 Corinthians 6:2b

Glory and praise to you, O Christ.
Behold, now is the favourable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation.
Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Gospel

Matthew 25:31-46

‘He will sit on his glorious throne and he will separate people one from another.’

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.”

‘Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?” Then he will answer them, saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

In his day, many people did not recognize God present in Jesus. He seemed too ordinary to be someone through whom God was at work in any significant way. The people of Nazareth said, ‘Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?’ Then when Jesus was crucified by the Romans this confirmed for many people that God could not have been visiting them through Jesus. How could God be present in the crucified body of a convicted criminal? Yet, we believe that God was present in Jesus throughout his life, and especially in his death, even though very few recognized Jesus as God-with-us.

At the final judgment, people will ask, ‘when did we ever see you in need of our help?’ God’s presence was not always obvious to Jesus’ contemporaries, and his presence is not always obvious to us either. It comes to us not in signs and wonders but in weakness, in the needs of others, whoever they are.

Elsewhere Jesus says whoever welcomes a child welcomes him. There is a deeper, more sacred, quality to our encounters with others than we might realize at the time, especially in people who are weak and vulnerable.