

Reading for Weekday in the Third Week of Lent

March 13th 2026

First reading

Hosea 14:1-9

‘We will say no more, “Our God,” to the work of our hands.’

Thus says the Lord: Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, ‘Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay the fruit of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, “Our God”, to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.’

I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the corn; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 81(80): 6c-8a. 8b-9. 10-11b. 14, 17. R cf. 11a, 9a

I am the Lord your God; listen to my voice.

A voice I did not know said to me:

‘I freed your shoulder from the burden;
your hands were freed from the builder’s basket.
You called in distress and I delivered you.’

‘I answered, concealed in the thunder;
at the waters of Meribah I tested you.

Listen, my people, as I warn you.

O Israel, if only you would heed!’

‘Let there be no strange god among you,
nor shall you worship a foreign god.

I am the Lord your God,
who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’

‘O that my people would heed me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!

But Israel I would feed with finest wheat,
and satisfy with honey from the rock.’

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 4:17

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Repent, says the Lord,

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Gospel

Mark 12:28b-34

‘You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love your neighbour.’

At that time: One of the scribes came up to Jesus and asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Short reflection on the reading for today

The scribes (*doctors of the law*) are generally portrayed as arguing against Jesus. But in this instance, Jesus and the scribe are very much of the same mind. Jesus assures him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” They agreed about the two great commandments of the Law. The first commandment calls us to love God and the second to love our neighbour. The priority is given to God. The two commandments differ about the intensity of the love required. It is only God who is to be loved with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is only God who is deserving of our total love. To love God in this way is to be caught up in God’s love for humanity and that is where the second commandment comes in. Love of neighbour is where the pure and total love of God invariably leads us.