

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT FOLLOWING GOD'S LAWS

Laws are very important in every society, because without the rule of law, there is chaos and instability. Laws promote the common good. They govern both civil and religious activity.

In order for the Israelites to live in peace and harmony, after leaving Egypt, God gave them the Ten Commandments. Even though they were given to them by God, it was more a way of helping them to have good relationships with one another, and fostering unity and love. Thus, seven of the ten were about their fellow human beings and the other first three about God.

The tablets of the commandments were first kept in the Ark which was put under the Tent, and later in the Temple; and it was a sign of God's presence in the midst of the Israelites. The Psalmist talks about the importance of the law of God. He writes, "The Law of Yahweh is perfect, refreshment to the soul; the decree of Yahweh is trustworthy, wisdom for the simple. The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes," (Ps. 19:7-8).

In the gospel, we heard Jesus driving away those selling in the temple and the money changers, because they had turned it to be a market place instead of being a house of prayer. They were breaking the first commandment, because they thought more about money than the worship of God. When asked about His action, Jesus talked about His body being the Temple, and it was going to be destroyed and in three days raised again.

The Lord God promised to write the commandments on human hearts and not on tablets. This is the time of the New Covenant when we become the temple of the Holy Spirit after our baptism. St. Paul told the believers in Corinth, "Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God dwelling in you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy; and you are that temple," (1Cor.3:16-17).

Do we realize that we are the temple of God? Human beings are no more considered sacred entities having the Spirit of God. Many people consider human beings as any other object which can be disposed of at any time, or be treated in any way we like. Sometimes we value some objects more than the human being.

Why is this happening? It is because we have removed the presence of God in our midst, and have disregarded His commandments. We consider the passion, death and resurrection of Christ as foolishness, as St. Paul said about the Jews and the Greeks. It is said that the Ten Commandments have never been more disobeyed in the history of the human race than they are right now.

It was written, "Zeal for your house consumes me," Is that happening to us today? We worship money, power, and wealth. Our churches are stadia, and our denominations are various sporting clubs. Saturdays and Sundays instead of worshipping God we go to adore our players and clubs.

The Psalmist sings, "How great is your name O Lord our God, through all the earth! Your majesty is praised above the heavens on the lips of children and of babes," (Ps. 8:1). Is it the same on earth, that His name is praised by children and babes? How respectful and obedient are children to their parents, and what kind of examples are parents giving to their children?

How many people, young and old, are killed every year through abortion and euthanasia, and other foul means? Do we promote the dignity of human life? How do we resolve conflicts and quarrels?

It seems adultery and fornication are the things of the past. Gone are the days when one was banished when she was found not to be a virgin during her marriage. It seems people are no more afraid to cheat on their spouses. Sexual sin is very rampant in our world today. The body is no more a sacred temple.

Now it does not matter how I get rich. I can steal from anywhere and by any means. We covet our neighbour's goods. Lies are told all over - on radio and television, and on the internet. We deceive people to win votes or get positions, and after that anything goes.

There is chaos in our personal lives, in our homes, cities, schools, country, the whole world, because we have removed God in our midst, and replaced Him with other material things. If we do not bring God back into our lives, nothing will bring us peace, and nobody can save the world.

Today we could have read about God giving water to the Israelites in the desert from the rock, and Jesus promising living water to the woman He met on the well. Jesus told her that a time would come when true worshippers would worship God in spirit and in truth. If we are not guided by the Spirit to obey the commandments of God, we cannot worship in spirit and in truth. The Spirit who is the living water will bring us life.