

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

'The Law Of the Lord Is Perfect'

Sunday's Readings(R3)
Jn. 2:13-25. (R1) Ex. 20: 1-17. (R2) 1 Cor. 1:22-25.

The theme of the Lenten Sunday readings is **Covenant**. The two most sacred institutions of the old Covenant were the Law (R1) and the Temple (R3).



Fr. Shamon

How faithful God is!

First He called our first parents. They failed Him. So He called Noah. Again, people failed Him. Finally, He called Abraham. Abraham was faithful! So He called Abraham's descendants from Egypt and also made a Covenant with them.

When God made a Covenant with our first parents, He asked but one thing: **obedience!** "Don't do this. I mean it: you'll die if you do!" Of Noah, He asked a bit more: "Don't kill your fellowman. Instead increase and multiply and fill the earth." Of Abraham, He asked still more: **faith.** "Believe me!" He said to Abraham: "Leave the land of your kinsfolk and go to a

land that I will show you. Consecrate the wellsprings of life to me by circumcision. I'll do the rest: give you a land and a posterity." Abraham believed.

Centuries later, God did so much for Abraham's descendants, the Hebrews, that He could demand much more of them — not just **faith**, but a **faith that expressed itself in a way of life patterned on the ten Commandments**. This Law is exalted in the Responsorial Psalm. "The Law of the Lord," wrote the psalmist, "is perfect. It refreshes the soul, gives joy to the heart, enlightens the eye. Yes, it is more precious than gold, enduring forever."

Is it any wonder, then, that Israel put the tables of the Law in an ark, the Ark of the Covenant. And then one day housed both the Ark and the Law in the Temple, the very focal point of the Hebrew's life. By keeping the Law, they could find God, the God of their fathers.

Jesus didn't come to destroy the Law (Mt. 5:17), but to fulfill it. Yet He constantly challenged the power that both Law and Temple had assumed over the lives of his fellowmen. What should have been life to the soul, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, had become an **unsupportable burden**. Bureaucracy, in this case

religious bureaucracy, was doing its usual thorough job of grinding up those it intended to serve. Jesus would have none of it. While He showed nothing but mercy and forgiveness and love to weak sinners, He had nothing but harshest words for those in authority in Israel. He publicly called them hypocrites, a brood of vipers, whitened sepulchres. He didn't hate them. He wanted to shock them out of their complacency. He knew He would fail and for His forthrightness, the custodians of Law and Temple would condemn Him to death.

This death would end the Old Covenant and usher in the New and Eternal Covenant. In this New Covenant, institutions would be replaced by a Person. God is revealed, not in Law and Temple, but in a Man who died for love of us and rose again.

The Jews asked Jesus for signs. Jesus now asks us for signs. His death and resurrection are the signs of His love. What are the signs of our love? Jesus asked for one only: "If you love me, keep my commandments" — out of love!

Papal Rosary

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope John Paul II recited the rosary on Vatican Radio on the first Saturday of Lent. Vatican Radio announced that the pontiff will take part in the rosary broadcast on the first Saturday of each month.

Pre-Marriage Program

Alfred — A marriage preparation program has been scheduled for Saturday, March 31, at St. Jude's Chapel on the Alfred Ag-Tech campus here.

Engaged Encounter is specifically designed for dialogue between the couple. Through a series of talks presented by a team of two married couples and a priest, the couple is afforded the opportunity to share ideas and values about their lives together as well as come to a realization of the importance of marriage. It is open to couples of all faiths.

The program will begin at 8:30 a.m. and run into the evening. The cost is \$15 a couple which includes the evening meal. Deadline for reservations is March 17 and anyone interested should contact Phil and Rosanne Alesso at 607-587-8306.



New Council

A new Knights of Columbus Council has been established in Fairport. Officers of the 60-member group include (left to right) Eugene Sweeney, William Emling, Anthony Rinaldi, Kevin Sammon, John LaForte, William Tiberio, Eugene J. Tiberio, grand knight; Kenneth Konecny, Dennis Casey, Michael Hammett and Philip Fox. Not pictured are Lawrence Kleinhenz and Paul LaChapelle. The council is in the midst of a membership drive.

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