**Scripture**

Exodus 20:1-17

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**Zeal for God’s Law**

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**Our commitment is revealed in our passion for God and God’s people.**

- In the Old Testament reading, Moses brings God's way of life to God's people, in the Ten Commandments.
- The commandments are addressed to adults, but we introduce young children to their own heritage of a community founded on God's own justice and holiness.
- In today's session we also continue to explore the season of Lent.

**Question of the Week**

How does today's story tell us about what is important to people? to God?

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**Core Session**

- Getting Started
- Old Testament Story: Rules for God's People
- Snack Activity: Cookie-Dough Numerals (*premixed cookie dough, small paper plates, waxed paper*)
- Praying Together (*play dough or bowl of sand, birthday candles*)

**Enrichment**

- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Talk Together: Rules
- Story-Review Game: Love God, Love Your Neighbor
- Info: The Preschool- and Kindergarten-Age Child
- Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

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**Helps for Catechists**

- More about Today's Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- Liturgy Link: Spirituality of Prayer
- The World of the Bible: Money Changers
Children listen to and recite traditional number-based folklore. Ask if children know any rhymes or songs with numbers. Find the words to “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe” and “This old man, he played one” and recite one or both with the children before you begin today’s story.

Old Testament Story (5-10 minutes)

Story Focus: Write each numeral from 1 to 10 on a separate paper plate. On one sheet of poster board write the title Love God. Draw a picture of a stick figure praying. On a second sheet of poster board write the title Love Your Neighbor. Draw a picture of two stick figures hugging. Spread the paper plates in front of you. Teach the children to call out the numerals written on the plates as you lift them one by one.

God said to God’s people, “I am your God. You are my people. I want you to love me. (Show the Love God poster.) These rules will help you love me.”

(Hold up the paper plate with numeral 1 until the children call out, “One!” Give the plate with a piece of masking tape to a child. Help the child tape it to the poster.) “You have only one God. Don’t call anything you can see or make God.”

(Plate two:) “Don’t use God’s name the wrong way.”

(Plate three:) “Make time for God, especially on God’s special day.”

Then God said to God’s people, “I want you to love your neighbors, too. (Show the Love Your Neighbors poster.) These rules will help you love your neighbors.”

(Plate four:) “Be good to your father and mother when they are old.”

(Plate five:) “Don’t kill people.”

(Plate six:) “Love your own husbands and wives.”

(Plate seven:) “Don’t steal.”

(Plate eight:) “Don’t lie.”

(Plate nine:) “Love your family.”

(Plate ten:) “Don’t take anything that belongs to other people.”

How many rules did God give God’s people? Ten! Ten rules for God’s people!

Snack Activity (10-15 minutes)

Cookie-Dough Numerals

Write the numerals 1-10 on ten 6” paper plates. Divide the paper plates and premixed cookie dough among the children. Put a sheet of waxed paper on each plate. Show the children how to roll the dough between two hands to make snakes, then help the children use the snakes to copy the numeral shapes on the paper plates. Transfer the finished numerals to a cookie sheet and bake.

You can then invite children to munch these number cookies as you review today’s story. If five or fewer children are in the group, divide each cookie among all the children. If there are more than five children, divide the cookies among the children so that each child gets a part of a cookie.

Ask the children:

◆ How many rules did God give God’s people?

For each commandment, hold up a paper plate until the children call out its number. Then recite the commandment from today’s story that goes with that number. Ask the children to repeat the commandment you say before they eat.

Praying Together (5 minutes)

Remind children that we are in Lent, a time of purple—and prayer. As in the 1st Sunday of Lent, invite the children to make a prayer corner.

Put a lump of play dough or a bowl of sand in the prayer corner. Insert several dozen birthday candles in play dough or sand. Sit with the children in the prayer corner. Pray:

◆ Thank you, God, for loving us.
◆ Thank you, God, for giving us so many people who love us and whom we can love, too. (Ask children, “Who loves you? Who do you love?” For each person named, touch a candle in the play dough or sand.)
◆ Thank you, God, for (name each child individually). Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s Discover to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Discover the Good News (5-10 minutes)

In today’s Discover the Good News, you’ll find a story-starter activity called “God’s Rules.” Invite children to look at the pictures together. Discuss:

◆ How do the people in the pictures act when they love God?
◆ How do they act when they love one another?
◆ What do we do when we love God?
◆ What do we do when we love one another?

In Discover, you’ll also find pictures of common household items. Invite children to name the items. What rules might go with each item?

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:

◆ “God Makes Promises” (p. 28 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)
◆ “Friends with God” (p. 32 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Talk Together (5-10 minutes)

Rules

Children share a simple discussion about rules.

Gather children together in the storytelling area. Ask:

◆ What rules do we follow?
◆ Why do we follow rules?

Preschool children may answer that we follow rules because big people make us. Accept the children’s ideas with such phrases as “So you think that…” or “You feel that…” but be willing to share your own ideas, too.

You might tell the children a rule that you follow because of love, such as being quiet at night so that your family can sleep.

Story-Review Game (5-15 minutes)

Love God, Love Your Neighbor

Children consider ways to love God and neighbors with Love God, Love Your Neighbor, a vigorous movement game.

Use the posters made in today’s Old Testament Story activity (see p. 2). Tape the Love God poster on one wall. Tape the Love Your Neighbor poster on another wall. Touch the Love God poster as you say:

◆ God wants us to love God. What are ways we can love God? (Do not expect children to repeat any of the commandments from today’s story. Be willing to give the children help with such ideas as going to church, saying prayers, reading the Bible, etc.)

Walk to the Love Your Neighbor poster, touch it, and say:

◆ God wants us to love our neighbors. What are ways we can love our neighbors? (Again, instead of repetition from today’s story, encourage simple ideas such as playing with a friend, making up after a fight, helping someone with chores, etc.)

Ask children to stand together in the center of the room. Say:

◆ I’m going to tell you a rule. If it’s a rule that tells you how to love God, run to the Love God poster.
◆ If it’s a rule that tells you how to love your neighbor, run to the Love Your Neighbor poster.

Repeat a rule from the discussion, such as “Go to church.” Be willing to help children figure out which poster to run to. Draw on the best-understood ideas of the discussion to repeat the game many times, varying the movements used—running, hopping, galloping, etc.
Who am I?
If young children could describe themselves, here are some things they might tell us. (Keep in mind that these are just characteristics of many four- and five-year-olds.) The four-year-old who can accurately cut with scissors, or the five-year-old who doesn’t recognize any letters aren’t necessarily “gifted” or “slow”—they’re just on their own developmental timetables.

Generally, the following describes the world view of 4s and 5s:
◆ The world is great, and I’m getting more and more of a handle on it.
◆ I like unusual sounds—not too loud—and textures, smells and sights.
◆ I like “experiments,” the messier the better.
◆ I love paper airplanes and anything else that flies.
◆ I like name-calling, the sillier the better.
◆ Birthday parties are the best, especially eating cake and deliberately popping balloons.
◆ I can dress myself but may still want mom to do it because I’m making scary changes: starting school and meeting new kinds.
◆ I still want somebody to take care of me, but I want to do lots of things by myself.
◆ Games with winners and losers aren’t as much for me as games where everyone wins. Losing will still make me cry.

My Brain and Body
◆ I like moving my whole body—running, tumbling, hopping, jumping. I probably don’t know yet how to skip or make a cartwheel. I like showing off new skills.
◆ My large motor muscles are more reliable. I can scramble up a ladder and slide down a slide with abandon.
◆ I’m learning how to catch and pitch.
◆ I can probably count up to ten and recognize letters. I’m moving from scribbles to recognizable shapes—often letters or numbers. I might be able to write my own name.
◆ I have a favorite way to be taught. You might tell me, show me or encourage my hands-on involvement each step of the way.

Living the Good News | Preschool/Kindergarten | 3rd Sunday of Lent – B

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More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings invite renewed commitment to our covenant relationship with God. In Exodus, the Ten Commandments become the standard of life for God’s people. Paul assures the Corinthians that their commitment to Christ, though foolish to the world, is the powerful core of Christian faith. In today’s gospel, Jesus’ passionate love for God ignites his anger against those who treat God’s house with disrespect.

Exodus 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments set forth the duties of the Israelites to God and to those within the community. The commandments formalize the covenant demands based on their special relationship to God.

“... who desires to correct all that he or she sees wrong there. And if it cannot be corrected, one endures and mourns. Let the zeal for God’s house consume every Christian wherever he or she is a member.” —St. Augustine of Hippo

physical representations of Yahweh, confirmed by the absence of such artifacts in excavations of Israelite sites even when idols of other gods are found.

Verse 7 is not a prohibition against God’s name in oaths, but against swearing falsely or misusing God’s name for spells and incantations. This led eventually to a refusal among pious Jews to pronounce the sacred name of Yahweh at all.

Verse 12 is directed more toward the responsibilities of grown children for the support of and respect for aged parents than toward the behavior of young children.

Verse 13 prohibits murder, not capital punishment or warfare. “Covet” (v. 17) probably implies an attempt to acquire unlawfully (“defraud,” Mark 10:19).

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Paul sets forth the general principle that the wisdom of God appears to be folly to those wise in worldly terms, while to those in the process of salvation, it reveals the power of God. So human-centered wisdom, which is itself closely related to our efforts, will be overturned by God.

Knowledge of God is possible through natural revelation, but the certainty sought for by submitting God to the world’s criteria of proof, either pragmatically in “signs” (v. 22) of power or intellectually in “wisdom” (v. 22) is not possible. God’s act of “foolishness” and “weakness” (v. 25) confounds both what the Jews expected of the Messiah and what Greeks believed about the immortal and impassible nature of divinity.

This principle of reversal is illustrated by the Corinthian community itself. Most of its members were not from the intellectual, political or social elite. (Indeed, the gospel appealed to slaves, women and children!) God chooses what the world counts worthless to overturn the world’s expectations.

John 2:13-25

Today’s reading recounts Jesus’ disruption of the daily business of the temple and the questioning of his authority. Jesus gives an enacted parable similar to the prophetic deeds of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Merchants had set up shop in the temple’s outer courts, the only area open to Gentiles who came to pray and seek Israel’s God. In the temple courtyard, unblemished animals were sold for sacrifice and pagan coins were exchanged for Jewish coinage to pay the temple tax. Jesus attacks not only the dishonesty of the temple trade but its very existence.

Jesus’ death and resurrection are the ultimate sign of his authority. As the water of the old covenant has been replaced with the wine of the new (2:1-11), so Jesus replaces the temple as the primary focus of worship.

Reflection

Those who like their Jesus sweet and pious better skip today’s gospel. Those who want to explore his complex depths should read on.

The scene in the temple can’t be camouflaged by platitudes: it is violent and chaotic. What prompted Jesus to act so dramatically? We have a clue in the way “my Father’s house” is used throughout John’s gospel. “In my Father’s house are many rooms” we read in 14:2. That sounds spacious, but there is no room for greed, betrayal or sacrilege. The money changers and merchants have desecrated what is most precious to God; they must be expelled quickly and efficiently.
In Jesus’ ensuing discussion with the Jews, their pride is attacked. Any of us who spent decades on a project might react the same way. As is often the case, they remain on a literal level, seeing the temple as a building. Jesus, however, sees it as an image of the self: beloved of God and incorruptible, transcending the most glorious edifice. As he protected sacred ground, so he fights to preserve God’s children from any who oppress, exploit or harm them. Do we respect each other or ourselves as much as he does?

**The Scriptures and the Catechism**

Today we are reminded that our covenant relationship with God entails obligations for us and for God. Our obligations are the Ten Commandments that God directly spoke to Moses on Sinai (CCC, #2052–82), which still serve as our fundamental guide to moral behavior. When our human practices deviate from these norms, we must be willing to reexamine our lives and change them (CCC, #1430–39) to be more in keeping with these guidelines (CCC, #1145–62, 2655).

**Liturgy Link**

**Spirituality of Prayer**

Western culture tends to undercut the Jewish understanding of human nature, which advocates the wholeness of human beings. Enduring remnants of Gnostic beliefs divide human nature into separate spiritual and physical aspects. The body, being physical and tied to the material world, has no value in itself and may be inextricably linked to evil. The spirit thus needs to be set free from the body through knowledge.

Though the Christian faith repudiated these early Gnostic teachings, western Christians still struggle with the idea that the body, with all its desires and needs, is a burden to our spiritual life instead of an asset to it. We still succumb to attitudes that suggest that prayer is a matter of the mind, or at least the heart, and that the body has no role in prayer. We still think of spirituality as excluding the body instead of seeing spirituality as the whole life of the person—body, mind, spirit; relationships, exercise, nutrition, education—in relationship to God.

When the four gospels portray Jesus at prayer, they emphasize that prayer defines his relationship with his heavenly Father. While we can identify set times for prayer—early mornings, late nights, synagogue worship—Jesus tells us something of his life and devotion and prayer saying, “I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak... I speak just as the Father has told me... The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (John 12:49-50, 14:10).

Jesus prays continuously. His private, personal prayers are built on his experiences of Jewish corporate prayers, which issue from scripture, and lead into a lifetime of intimate connectedness with God. For us, too, prayer must become a foundation for our lives. We incorporate our experiences into our prayer, and we incorporate prayer into every part of life.

As our relationship with God deepens, we find we can pray when we are making beds, driving to the office, sitting through an important business meeting or shopping for groceries. As Blessed Pope John XXIII reminded us, “Prayer is the raising of the mind to God. We must always remember this. The actual words matter less.” And St. Elizabeth Seton recommended that “We must pray without ceasing, in every occurrence and employment of our lives—that prayer which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God as in a constant communication.”

**The World of the Bible**

**Money Changers**

The Jerusalem Temple was not merely a place of worship but also a market where sacrificial animals were sold and a bank where the state treasury was kept (recall the widow who is contributing to the treasury in Mark 12:41-44).

Jews throughout the world were obligated to pay a special tax each year to provide for the upkeep of the Temple. But since Roman and Greek coins were stamped with images of their gods and emperors, these coins could not be used to pay the temple tax. Thus money changers congregated in the outer court of the Temple and exchanged these pagan coins for Jewish coins that could be used for Temple business.