

Third Sunday in Lent - Year B  
March 4, 2018  
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## Reflection

Questions of the law are always before us. We live in a democracy, so are continually involved in the creation of law. It taxes our wisdom and puts us in uncomfortable positions. For example, the government of Ontario approved euthanasia by passing Bill 84 - only they call it "Medical Assistance in Dying." The Church continues to struggle for the sanctity of life. A few weeks ago, the archdiocese provided letters for us to send to our MPPs. The letters asked their position on euthanasia, and what they would do to improve palliative care. Jack MacLaren is the MPP for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. He responded to the letters that we submitted, and stated his opposition to Bill 84 - but his voting record shows "absent or abstained". So questions remain.

Our faith and the teachings of the Church do guide us in law, but Christians continue to disagree. The consequences range from acrimony to war. Failure's burden is borne by the poor. Jesus faced law too, and he fulfilled it perfectly - his success bringing him to the Cross. He fulfilled the law by keeping it, interpreting it, and redeeming others - all of us - for breaking it.

First, Jesus kept the law completely. He was the only one who could. In the first reading we heard the Ten Commandments. The book of Exodus goes on to list even more laws, as does Leviticus. Jesus didn't abolish these laws, but kept them.

Exo 20:1-17  
Ps 19  
1 Cor 1:18, 22-25  
Jn 2:13-25

Second, Jesus interpreted the law with divine authority paired to perfect humanity. In the Sermon of the Mount, he released the hidden potential and new demands of the Ten Commandments. There's more to the law than external obedience. They require a reform of the heart. This is where our actions begin - with thoughts marred by vice yet strengthened by virtue - each decision a choice that brings us closer to or further from God - choices that can let us imitate his forgiveness and generosity (1968). But divine interpretation got him into trouble. Jesus confronted the Pharisees on questions about diet and the Sabbath. He declared that all foods are clean to eat and that it's OK to love your neighbour on the Sabbath. In today's Gospel, he went even further, driving the money changers out of the Temple. "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" They demanded a sign to justify his actions. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." It's a double prophesy. Jesus was crucified, and on the third day he rose again. After forty years, the Romans would destroy the Temple, but the Church would spread to the ends of the earth.

Paul proclaimed Christ crucified, seeing in it the power and wisdom of God. Through the Cross, Jesus fulfilled the law in a third way. He redeemed fallen humanity for breaking the law, paying the price for our sins.

He gave his life in willing obedience; a lamb led to the slaughter, who took away the sins of the world. Rewarded by resurrection, his own to be joined by those who believe, the eternal Word could sing the psalm of praise: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul."

Merciful justice awaits a new heaven and a new earth. But remember that it beat within a sacred heart among us that will return again, and calls us even now to the sacrifice of love.