

MARCH 11, 2026 MSGR. DAVID REILANDER

Our readings today speak about the law, and the first thing we need to ask is: Which law are we talking about? Here, we're talking about the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law given to Moses for the Israelites. "Not one letter of the law will be struck." What is Jesus referring to? Go back to the book of Deuteronomy, when God gave the law to Moses. "Do not add, do not subtract, from these laws."

There was a problem after the Israelites had been exiled in Babylon for 70 years. When they returned, they said to themselves, Let's make sure this never happens again. Our ancestors fled far from the law, and this is why this terrible thing happened to us. Well, they started doing what they weren't supposed to do. And that was, they started adding to laws, and interpreting them in a way that was not in the spirit of the law.

And so when Jesus appears on the scene, he seems to be doing things that are against the law. But as he teaches, the Pharisees had a misunderstanding of what the law was. "The law will not save you. Your intent is what God is looking for." They also forgot how God had summed up the Ten Commandments. "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, and mind." "Love your neighbour as yourself." It's strange, because the Jews pray this Shema prayer every day. But as things go on, sometimes we forget fundamentals. And fundamentally, the law is there to help us to love.

Now we find ourselves in the time of Lent. Now is a time for us traditionally to look back over the year. The primary question for us needs to be, "Have I loved God with my entire being?" My heart, my soul, my strength... And have I shown that love by loving my neighbour?

Well, there's so-and-so, and there's also somebody else. But there are no "buts." Love is love.

And this is what makes Christianity so difficult. Is the ability to love is there. But we find it so hard to do. Sometimes we forget that love is a sacrifice. Just as forgiveness is a sacrifice. Why should I forgive so-and-so, when he or she did whatever to me? It is because we follow the example of Christ. The sinless one who gave his life for ours. Have we ever been tested "to the point of shedding blood," as Saint Paul says, in loving someone?

But today we don't want focus to be on ourselves, and we've done wrong, and so we don't forgive. But unforgiveness is a spiritual toxin. In Lent, we turn away from sin, and follow the Gospel. And the Gospel, of course, is the Gospel of love. But it's so hard! Therefore, we have the grace of the Eucharist to assist us.

Whenever you're finding it difficult to get along with someone, or forgive someone, look at a crucifix. Meditate upon the corpus. There, Christ is praying to his Father, "Forgive them, they know not what they do." Forgive, love, pardon. Be merciful, kind, compassionate. These all take energy. And so, come to the Eucharist, to be replenished, renewed, re-energized. That you may be able to fulfil the law of God. That you may be able to love.