

## PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

### THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR B

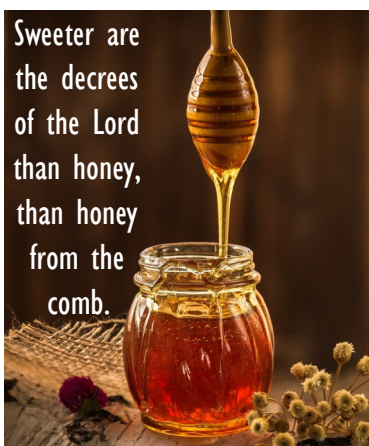
#### Psalm 18 (19)

This psalm is composed of two parts. The first six verses speak of the glory of God in the heavens, while today's section (vv. 8-11) describes the beauty of the Law of the Lord. The text consists of private prayers, rather than prayers for public assemblies.

The psalm also falls into the category of 'celebration on fulfilling God's Law'. These psalms of the Law are joyful psalms, for obedience to the Law is a joyful response in love to a gift given in love. The Law is no burden but a pleasure and privilege that revives the soul.

Today's verses celebrate the special revelation of God to Israel, given in the Law, by which the Lord gives Israel both life and wisdom.

The Law given to Israel on Sinai is not constricting but is liberating, for it shows how Israel may live as God's people, in the image of God and representing God to the world.



Sweeter are the decrees of the Lord than honey, than honey from the comb.

God's people are shown the way 'to be holy as I am holy' (Leviticus 19: 2): that is why the precepts of the Lord are *more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey* (v.10).

The psalm response comes from John's Gospel: 'You have the message of eternal life' (John 6: 68), and is in harmony with the theme of God's life-giving Law in the psalm itself.

(Compare also today's First Reading, Exodus 20: 1–17.)

***This Sunday, the readings for Year A may be used as an alternative. In this case, please refer to the Prego Plus for the Third Sunday in Lent, Year A.***

## Gospel John 2: 13–25

#### Just before the Jewish Passover

Jewish feasts are given prominence in John's Gospel: they exemplify institutions before the coming of Christ. Many Jews would converge on the Temple from far and wide, so there would have been an increase in the number of people looking to buy animals for sacrificial purposes.

#### Money changers at their counters

Roman and Greek coinage with the face of the Emperor engraved on it was not allowed by the Jewish authorities. Only half-shekels from the Tyre region, made of pure silver and without facial representation, were acceptable currency. This accounts for the presence of money changers.

#### 'Stop turning my Father's house into a market'

Contrary to the other Evangelists, John is not complaining here about unfair trading, but about trading in that particular place. Jews and Gentiles are equal in God's eyes: an important notion for the early Church.

Jesus begins to reveal his true identity as the Messiah by calling the Temple **MY Father's** house. He has a special relationship with God.

#### His disciples remembered the word of Scripture

The quotation is from Psalm 69 (70): 9. We see here an example of the disciples understanding and their belief gradually unfolding with the help of Scripture. However, although the disciples are present, there is often a certain delay before they realise the full import of what they have witnessed.

#### 'What sign can you show us?'

John's Gospel emphasises 'signs' rather than miracles. The Jews want a sign to justify his authority. Jesus's answer refers to his death and resurrection as the ultimate sign, but the Jews misunderstand his answer.

#### 'Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up'

At the time of writing this Gospel, the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed for several decades. Jesus is the new Temple; John always writes in the light of Jesus's resurrection.