



A Reflection on the Third Week of Lent
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Sweeter than Honey

This week, our Lenten reflection is about laws and decrees and commandments. The great story of Moses and the Ten Commandments is re-told. The writer of the Psalms speaks to the decrees of the Lord and cries that they are “sweeter than honey, and drippings from the honey comb.” (Ps 19:10)

We know a lot about laws and decrees and regulations. They often seem to consume our time and energy. We’re filling out forms when we really feel we should be caring for people who need us. Sweeter than honey is not how we would describe these types of ordinances!

Yet the people of Israel treasured the law, not because of the laws or commandments themselves, but for what they signified. The commandments were the sign of covenant, the sacred and binding pledge between God and a people. Keeping the commandments did not make the people holy. God’s choice and love made the people holy. Keeping the commandments was a result of God’s love for them and their love for God. The commandments—the law—were the sign to the world that Israel was indeed God’s chosen one. Obedience to law and decree was an activity of the heart. Honoring the law was about identity, not perfection.

Jesus knew this. He knew that the law was not an end in itself, but rather, that caring, healing and being with those who needed him took precedence over the stipulations of the law. He was faithful to who he was: the one sent from God to be God’s presence and love in an aching world; the one who came to proclaim the good news. He told us, “God’s reign is here.”

The demands and the danger of fidelity to identity became visible in an incident told in the Gospel of John. Jesus went to the Temple to worship and found it filled with buying and selling. The Temple’s identity and purpose had been compromised. He upended tables and chased the money changers from the holy place. He declared that they had made his Father’s house a market place. (Jn 2:16) He knew who he was and what the purpose of the Temple was. He knew that the truth of identity can be very costly and can be easily compromised.

The Catholic Health Association has attempted to capture the identity of the Catholic health ministry in these few sentences:



Lenten Reflections

*We are the people of Catholic health care,
a ministry of the church continuing Jesus' mission of love and healing today.
As provider, employer, advocate, citizen –
bringing together people of diverse faiths and backgrounds –
our ministry is an enduring sign of health care
rooted in our belief that every person is a treasure,
every life a sacred gift,
every human being a unity of body, mind and spirit.*

*We work to bring alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace.
We answer God's call to foster healing,
act with compassion, and promote wellness for all persons and communities,
with special attention to our neighbors
who are poor, underserved, and most vulnerable.
By our service, we strive to transform hurt into hope.*

Every day of our lives, that identity is challenged. Laws and regulations—whether we are obeying them or fighting them—threaten to consume us and take all of our attention. Commerce creeps into places meant for healing. We forget who we are individually and collectively. We lose our way. We lose heart.

Lent is the time to find our way again. It is a time to return to our hearts where we will find the meaning, strength and beauty of our ministry. Lent is the time to dwell in God's promise, a promise written in our hearts.

The Catholic Health Association would like to thank Jon Sarta for allowing us to use his music from the albums "The Catholic Music Project Volume V: Lent," and "The Catholic Music Project Volume VI: Easter" for the podcast version of this reflection. His music can be obtained from mljmusic.com.